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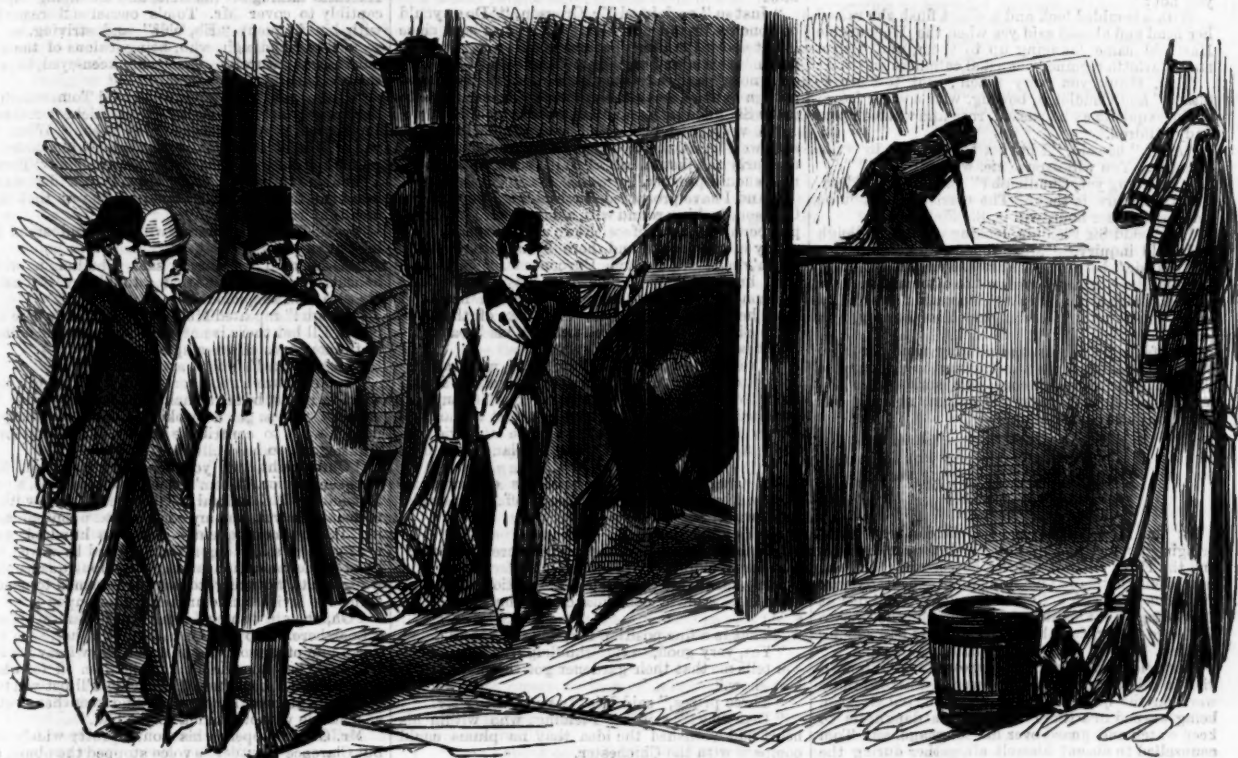
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[PRICE ONE PENNY.



[THE NEW FAVOURITE.]

MAURICE DURANT.

CHAPTER IX.

Cursed be the forms that err from Nature's golden rule!
Cursed be the gold that gilds the straitened forehead of the fool!

"I LOOK upon dinner, Miss Lawley, as one of the most important things in life," said the Honourable Mr. Hartfield, shaking his curled head with profound earnestness, and crossing his long legs with an air of comfortable ease. "You look as if you thought me wrong. I'm right, I assure you. I know a fellow—he's vewy old—said he'd tried everything—by Jove! fighting, travelling, working, marrying—but all turned out blanks, nothing a prize except his dinner. He's a—a—what's his name?—Solomon—you know, eh?"

The scene was the drawing-room at Lady Mildred's. Dinner had just come to an end. Sir Fielding was comfortably ensconced in an easy-chair beside the fire opposite Lady Mildred, who, with Maud at her side, was recounting some travelling experience.

In a corner of the room Chudleigh, with an album in his hand, was leaning, watching Carlotta and the Honourable Clarence, who were seated on an ottoman.

Mr. Hartfield's voice, as it rose and fell, floated over to him, jarring upon his ears most discordantly, and set him wondering with a fiery impatience how the beautiful Carlotta could sit and listen with such smiling attention.

"Can you find no higher aim or end than dining, Mr. Hartfield?" said Carlotta, with a slight smile. "What would become of the world if all its inhabitants thought with you?"

"Good! by Jove!" murmured the exquisite. "That's a poser. Not that I care for the world, you know, no fellow does."

"You have not answered my question," said Carlotta.

"I can't," replied Mr. Hartfield; "it's so like a widdle, and I never could make out a widdle. I took

a magazine in once—you know what I mean; not a p-powder magazine, but a monthly journal. It was vewy good, you know—all stories and p-poetry; but there was always a page of c-conundrums and enigmas at the end; and I used to turn to this page—not because I wanted to, you know, but because I couldn't help it. I was f-fascinated, er, er!—difficult word, fascinated—and—Where was I? Oh, the widdles. Well, they used to stick in my mind for days and months, and I always used to be asking myself and sometimes other fellows why a p-pastrycook is like St. Paul's Cathedral, and all that sort of thing!" and, overcome by the ridiculousness of the idea, the honourable gentleman leant back and burst into a ripple of "eh, ehs!" in which Sir Fielding and Lady Mildred joined, for it was impossible to refrain from laughing at the absurd tone and manner of the fashionable exotic.

Chudleigh dropped the album with suddenness enough to make them all jump, and crossed over to the fire, and Maud, looking up, saw the frown upon his face, and, pitying him, rose from her seat and crossing over to Carlotta said:

"Will you sing something?"

"Ah, do, my dear," said Lady Mildred, and Carlotta rose and walked towards the piano, which Chudleigh opened for her, saying, in a low voice as he did so:

"It was a shame to disturb you."

She raised her eyes for one moment to his cloudy face and seemed about to answer him, but dropped them again without speaking and commenced playing.

Chudleigh leaned against the piano with his arms folded across his breast and his head lowered thoughtfully.

Mr. Hartfield had exchanged his seat for one beside Sir Fielding's chair, and at the pause of the song Chudleigh heard his father say, in answer to some question of the exquisite:

"Mr. Gregson and I don't meet very often. I regret to say that I am not of much use in parochial affairs."

"You ought to know him, weally," said Mr. Hartfield. "He's a vewy good fellow enough, you know

—vewy wough, but made of the wight sort of metal."

Sir Fielding bowed.

"I am glad to hear you say so," he said, mildly.

"Oh, yes, he is, I assure you," said Mr. Hartfield, who, for some reason or other, seemed bent upon championing his friends. "Here's an example—I don't like examples, they remind one of arithmetic as a wule—one of your bulls rot into his flower garden the other morning and did no end of d-damage. Now another fellow would have p-pounded the animal and made a disturbance—eh? But Gweson didn't, by Jove! He went about by himself vociferating for a quarter of an hour, and then had the bull driven back into your m-meadow, and set his man to mend the hedge. That's original—eh? By Jove!"

"It's more than original," said Sir Fielding, warmly. "It's generous and gentlemanly. I will lose no time in writing to thank Mr. Gregson."

"By Jove! you mustn't do it that way, you know," said Mr. Hartfield, quickly, shaking his head. "Gweson would know I'd split on him, and—by Jove! Oh, I say, you know—eh?"

"I understand you," said Sir Fielding, smiling at the enigmatical objection. "At least, I must thank him in some way."

"May I suggest that you wide over to the Folly to-morrow morning?" said Mr. Hartfield. "I'm sure you'd like them. They must be good-natured sort of people to let a fellow go on his own hook as I do. Twy them, as the twadespeople say, Sir Fielding. It would weally be a kindness—eh, Miss Chichester?" and he turned to Maud with a smile.

"Do call, papa," said Maud. "It was very good of Mr. Gregson, was it not?" and, leaning over, she touched Chudleigh—who, as he was bending over Carlotta and saying something in a quiet, eager voice, started at the interruption—and told him the incident of the bull and the flower-garden, adding, in a lower tone: "See, Chud, papa has almost given way. Do persuade him to call."

Chudleigh nodded acquiescingly, but not with any show of pleasure, and, seating himself beside Carlotta, continued the conversation, if conversation it

could be called when he alone was speaking, Carlotta listening with lowered face and eyes.

"The horse is quite safe. You know I would not let you ride it if it were not. Say you will come. Give me your promise. Maud will be so delighted; she is fond of a gallop, you know. Let me bring the horse round for you to-morrow morning if the weather be bright, will you?" and he waited eagerly for the answer which she seemed loth to give. "I know you are fond of riding," he continued, persuasively, "for I heard you tell Maud that you were, and I am sure you will like 'The Sultan.' You will come, will you not?"

With a troubled look and a slight flush she raised her head and almost said yes when the Honourable Hartfield came lounging up to them, and with a start Carlotta regained her usual calmness and said:

"No, thank you very much; not to-morrow, please," and Chudleigh, bowing, with a stern frown at the exquisite as he passed, rose and walked up to Lady Mildred.

"Aunt," he said, "I have a few letters to write to-night. You will excuse me, will you not?"

"Not going yet, Chudleigh?" said Lady Mildred.

"Dear me, how is that? The carriage will not be here for another hour, will it, Sir Fielding?"

"No," said Sir Fielding, looking up at Chudleigh with mild inquiry. "Must you go, Chad?"

"Yes, sir," he replied, and, shaking hands with Lady Mildred, crossed over to the ottoman.

"Good-night, Mr. Hartfield," he said as cordially as he could, and "Good-night, Miss Lawley," as he left.

"Poor fellow! It was an unhappy time for him. He seemed hard that such an idiot as the Honourable Clarence appeared to be could win smiles from the woman he loved, whereas he gained nothing but cold looks and cold words."

CHAPTER X.

Here comes the aristocrat
With courtly mien and gait;
While close upon his heels
The men of money wait.

BE the Honourable Mr. Hartfield's reason for bringing about an acquaintance between the Hall and the Folly what it might, he certainly had arranged his tactics in an astonishingly masterly way and successfully, for the morning after the dinner at the Cottage Sir Fielding and Chudleigh rode over to the large red brick house which they had so long ignored.

Hartfield had advised the Misses of the intended visit in a few laconic, off-hand words, and the family were on the eve of the visit, old Gregson being warned in a timely way by his daughters to keep watch and guard over his language, and Tom counselled to absent himself altogether during the interview, or keep a prudent silence, and on no account to offer to "lay" Sir Fielding two to one or bet him the odds.

Notwithstanding these preparations the Gregson family were extremely agitated when Sir Fielding and Chudleigh dismounted and were ushered into the drawing-room.

"How do you do, Sir Fielding?" said Mr. Gregson, grasping the long white hand in his short red one. "Happy to see you. Quite an honour, sir. Hope you're well, Mr. Chichester. Mrs. Gregson, my daughters, Misses Bella and Lavinia. Met Miss Maud at the Mothers' Meeting, I believe, several times."

Sir Fielding and Chudleigh then passed over to the ladies, who, all smiles and flatterings, made room for them on the sofa, old Gregson seating himself in an easy-chair and commencing a conversation—concerning the weather, of course—with Chudleigh.

Sir Fielding, between the two girls, was highly amused for some few minutes, not insensible to their evident attempts at blandishment, and, thinking after all that they were rather well behaved and quiet, said:

"My daughter would have accompanied me this morning, but she has a headache. I am commissioned with her compliments, which I beg of you to accept. Will you do us the honour of calling at the Hall when next you are near?"

Mr. Gregson bowed, and the girls murmured "Delighted." Then Sir Fielding rose and commenced the real object of his visit.

"Mr. Gregson," he said, "I owe you some thanks. Permit me to discharge the debt."

"What's that, sir?" asked Mr. Gregson, bristling up from his chair. "Wasn't aware of any debt. No thanks due to me for anything that I know of. Don't quite understand, Sir Fielding."

"You have added to your generosity by forgetting it so quickly," replied Sir Fielding, with his quiet, courtly smile. "I have come to apologise for my bull, and express my regret for the damage and annoyance which his trespass must have caused you. I only learnt it yesterday, or, be assured, would have found an earlier opportunity to thank you for your consideration."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" retorted Mr. Gregson, slowly relapsing into his old manner at the warmth of Sir Fielding's apology. "Bulls will be bulls. He didn't do much harm, and if he had I suppose that wouldn't be any reason why one gentleman should forget himself in regard to another. I'm about sure if one of my cattle had got on to your grounds you would have acted something after the same style."

Sir Fielding coloured slightly, for he had a shrewd suspicion that Mr. Gregson's bull, had it trespassed on the Chichester grounds, would have gone into the pound; therefore he thought it safest to bow.

"Just so," exclaimed Mr. Gregson. "Do as you'd be done by" is my motto, and always has been since I first started in life. I commenced on that principle and went along on that principle and I'm going on it now," and he brought his heavy fist down upon a papier-mâché table with sufficient force to make Sir Fielding jump and Chudleigh smile.

"A very good principle," said Sir Fielding, his soft, well-bred voice presenting a marked contrast to the burly one just silent. "With such a principle man should prosper."

"And I have prospered, Sir Fielding," replied Mr. Gregson, looking round with a defiant air. "I have prospered. I began life with two and fourpence halfpenny in my pocket, and here I am with—well, it doesn't matter how much. I'm content. I've worked hard but uprightly. This hand may be hard but it's honest," and Mr. Gregson flourished his right hand before him with a decided shake of the head, while Sir Fielding muttered beneath his breath:

"It is hard."
"I've worked my own way, sir, I may say unhelped, unaided. I've known what hardship is and the bitterness, and I've known what misfortune is; but hardship and misfortune don't hurt a man, it's luxury and idleness, extravagance and vice, as ruins a man, and that's what England is coming to."

Mr. Gregson having delivered this opinion, emphasised by another bang on the unoffending table, sat down.

Sir Fielding smiled.

"Your life must have been an interesting one," said Sir Fielding.

Then, turning to the window and anxious to escape or rather avoid a continuance of the subject, he said:

"That is a fine position for your fruit trees."

"Yes, very good," said Chudleigh. "Miss Gregson tells me that their gardener got the prize at the last show."

"Three prizes," said Miss Lavinia, modestly.

"Dear me!" said Sir Fielding, who within his heart had cherished the idea that no plums could compare with the Chichester.

"Would you like to walk round?" said Mr. Gregson, and, Sir Fielding assenting, the three gentlemen made their way into the conservatory.

Sir Fielding was astounded at their magnificence and appointments.

"This is very beautiful," he said, with admiration.

"That arrangement for the first is a splendid improvement," said Chudleigh. "Maud's ferns would be improved if she adopted this plan."

Mr. Gregson looked pleased.

"Well," he said, "they are nice, I suppose. They ought to be, for they cost a mint of money—a mint of money," and he shook his head slowly. "But, there, I don't mind, it's a whim of my daughters, and they never have a wish ungratified. Papa, they say, I want a conservatory. I want a new pony. I want a set of brilliantes. They have them. Conservatory, ponies, brilliantes—no matter what they ask for they get it."

Sir Fielding murmured something which sounded like "Indulgent father, value of money," and the three descended the steps on to the lawn.

As they did so Mr. Hartfield appeared coming round the corner, exquisitely dressed in a loose morning coat of purple velvet, perfectly fitting pearl-gray trousers and a deerstalker that set off his golden hair to perfection.

Arranging his eyeglass, Mr. Hartfield lounged forward, and with a noiseless laugh of delight shook hands.

"Ah, Sir Fielding, delightful morning, is it not? Ah, Mr. Chichester, can you play racket? Yes! Give me a game, eh? Oh! Points? Oh, fenced and player I assure you. Mr. Gregson, Tom I mean, beats me frightfully. Ah, by Jove! here is Mr. Gregson," he added as Tom Gregson, in a brown out-away coat, light trousers, and horse-looking deerstalker, emerged from the racket hall.

Mr. Chichester, Mr. Gregson. If you want any information about the next handicap, Mr. Chichester, Mr. Gregson's the man. He knows a horse when he sees it. No, no, I don't mean that. I should have said that he's a most excellent judge of horses. Eh, Tom, eh?"

Mr. Thomas Gregson looked half stily, half complimented.

"I am not a bad judge of a horse," he admitted.

"Coming to have a game, Mr. Chichester? Fine game. I will bet you what you like there is not a healthier sport except hunting going. Now, Hartfield, what points?"

Chudleigh shook his head.

"I am very sorry," he said, "I must return with Sir Fielding."

Sir Fielding and Mr. Gregson had gone on to the stables.

The three younger men followed them, Clarence Hartfield talking all the time, and managing imperceptibly to cover Mr. Tom's occasional remarks with his frequent "Eh, eh?" and striving, so it seemed to Chudleigh, who, being jealous of the exquisite, was naturally suspiciously keen-eyed, to pass this meeting over pleasantly.

"Hullo, here's the governor," said Tom, entering the first stable. "Look here, Mr. Chichester. I can show you a good bit of horseflesh. What do you think of that?" and with a knowing look he pulled the cloth off a showy-looking animal. "That's a good one to look at, eh? How do you do, sir?" he added, turning to Sir Fielding, who at that moment entered.

Sir Fielding shook hands with him and stood to look at the horse.

"A splendid creature," said Chudleigh, with honest admiration. "Rather a tough one, is it not? Its ears look suspicious."

"Bough!" repeated Mr. Tom. "I should guess she is too. I'll bet there is not a more spirited animal in the country. Have a spin round?"

And he jerked his head at the sound.

Chudleigh was a good horseman, and did not know what fear was, but it struck him that it would be scarcely wise to get a broken head or a damaged nose simply to contribute to Mr. Tom Gregson's amusement, so he declined.

"Quite right, sir, you're quite right," said Mr. Gregson, senior. "Tom's an idiot with horses, a perfect idiot. This animal, sir, is a beast. I knew it the moment I saw it, but my son insisted upon purchasing it, and consequently there's a hundred guineas gone in a kicking machine," and he waved his hand in denunciation at the obnoxious quadruped, who by its flinging to and fro seemed to understand the lavish condemnation passed upon her.

"Oh, she ain't so bad as all that," said Mr. Tom. "Look here. Bob says she ain't no better, says she kicks him off as soon as he's on. Now I say it's his fault. What does he let her kick him off for when once he's on? Look here, Hartfield; I'll bet you two to one in guineas I mount her and keep her as still as a statue without a kick to the bad."

Mr. Gregson opened his mouth pretty widely too, but Clarence Hartfield's voice stopped the abuse, or whatever was coming, by drawing:

"Done, by Jove! and twble if you like."
"I'll double it," said Tom, without hesitation, and telling one of the groomst to come and saddle her.

It was hard work for the man, but after a great deal of backing, kicking, hoisting and other gymnastics the saddle was slipped on and all ready.

Chudleigh and Sir Fielding looked on with some little astonishment.

Tom mounted the horse alone would have been a matter of no little danger, and they had not given Mr. Tom Gregson credit for courage.

"All ready, sir," said the groom, tucking his cap.

"Then take her out into the yard."

"Yard, sir?" muttered the groom, interrogatively, "not the paddock?"

"Yard, yard I said," replied Tom.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the groom, with whom Mr. Tom, through similarity of tastes, was a favourite.

"I was thinking of the paddock."

"Then you shouldn't think of the paddock," retorted Tom. "Go and do as you're told."

The man led the horse out. The animal was as quiet as a lamb, but with her ears laid well back, and her eyes leering viciously.

"Don't you think you'd better try the paddock, Mr. Gregson?" said Sir Fielding, mildly. "A fall on these stones would be dangerous."

"But I'm not going to fall, sir," said Tom. "Besides, she bet was for the yard, and I'll stick to it."

"Don't be foolish," growled his father.

But to this mild exhortation Mr. Tom made no reply, and followed by the others walked into the yard.

The moment he approached the horse it reared on its hind legs, then coming down with an ominous crash struck out behind.

"I'm off the bet if you like, Tom," said Mr. Hartfield. "You'll break your neck."

"I'll trouble it if you like," retorted Tom.

"No, it's wobbling you," said Clarence, shaking his head.

"All right," said Tom.

And taking his whip from the groom he, with a sudden spring, vaulted on to the saddle, and, hold-

ing the bridle with a grasp of iron, gave the beast a good slash across its satin skin.

Off she went across the yard like a thunderbolt, then made a sudden stop and an attempt to raise her heels, but with another slash and a peculiar turn of the hand her rider got her mouth well under, and she stood still.

"Keep a look-out, sir," cried one of the grooms, as the beast, perfectly astounded, laid back her ears right along her neck.

"Confound your mind your own business," shouted Tom, irately, and the groom slunk away.

"Now then," cried Tom, "she's to stand three minutes."

And with a lash of the merciless whip again he brought her with a leap into the centre of the yard. Then, stroking her neck, but in no whit lessening the strain on the bit, he kept her motionless almost as a statue, and, as Chudleigh cried out the third minute, he leapt to the ground with a grin.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Clarence Hartfield, assuming, with the aid of his eye-glass, a look of astonishment that was perfectly ridiculous, although he had known well that the feat would be performed. "Tom, you are an wonder. Here's the money; and the twick was worth it, eh, Sir Fielding?"

"Beautifully done," assented Sir Fielding, with genuine admiration, adding to Tom, whom he regarded with very different eyes to those which acknowledged his greeting, "if you would do me the favour to look over the stables at the Hall, Mr. Gregson, I think you would find one or two animals there that would interest you."

"You are very kind," said Tom, easily. "I should be glad to come. To tell you the truth I'm fond of horses—"

"Too fond," muttered his father, who, though proud of his son's achievement, could not miss an opportunity of growling at him.

"And I'm glad to make the acquaintance of a strange one now and then," he continued.

"Then come over to the Hall by all means," said Chudleigh. "I have just bought a new hack; perhaps you would be kind enough to give me your opinion of him. Will to-morrow suit you?"

"To-morrow will suit me," said Tom; and with this the gentlemen returned to the drawing-room, where the ladies were anxiously awaiting them.

"Sir Fielding," said Mrs. Gregson, triumphantly, "will you and Mr. Chichester partake of a little luncheon? There is some laid in the dining-room, and—"

"Ah, do, Sir Fielding," broke in Mr. Gregson. "I can give you a glass of dry sherry, the Aumontillado, Comte Lamotte, Milan."

"Deuced good," commented Clarence Hartfield.

"Let me recommend, Sir Fielding."

But neither Sir Fielding nor Chudleigh could be prevailed upon to stay, and after a little more small talk and the accepting of invitations to the Hall father and son departed.

For half a mile on the homeward journey neither spoke, Sir Fielding seeming lost in thought, and Chudleigh, who never on any occasion interrupted his father's meditative mood, walking by his side in silence.

Suddenly, however, Sir Fielding said:

"Well, Chud, what do you think of them?"

"All is not brass that glitters," replied Chudleigh, epigrammatically.

"That is true, that is true, Chud," assented Sir Fielding, smiling. "I think there is gold beneath the gilt."

"The father is a self-madman, but he is genuine," said Chudleigh. "And his son—well, he doesn't lack courage."

"No," said Sir Fielding. "I confess to some astonishment at the spirit he showed in mastering that animal. I did not imagine he possessed either the courage or the tact."

"I can't say I like him," said Chudleigh, "but I must say I admire his pluck. I suppose we must make them welcome at the Hall."

"Of course," said Sir Fielding, at once, his hospitality horrified at the thought of any half-measures.

Then there came a silence, again broke by Sir Fielding.

"What do you think of the women, Chud?"

"I haven't thought about them, sir," said Chud.

"They are very passable. I like Mrs. Gregson, and pity her. As to the girls, well, three weeks of Maud and a month of Miss Lawley—here his face flushed—taken consecutively would set them straight I think."

Sir Fielding sighed.

"It is for Maud's sake principally," he said, "that I have made their acquaintance. My darling has been looking unwell lately, Chud—eh? She is nothing nearly so light hearted as she used to be. Looks pale and thoughtful, too thoughtful for bright-eyed Maud. What is it, Chud, what is it?" he asked, anxiously.

"I cannot say," said Chud. "I have noticed that"

Maud has become very quiet lately and that she looks pale and distrustful, but I don't hold the clue, sir. Perhaps she wants a little society, and the Gregsons may do her good: certainly they will amuse her."

Sir Fielding gazed at his small feet dreamily.

"She has never been the same girl since the night Maurice Durant came back."

"Ah!" said Chudleigh. "Have you heard how he is, sir?"

Sir Fielding shook his head.

"I sent Wilson," he said, "but although he knocked several times no one came to him. Maurice Durant must have been out in the woods, and the old woman may have been in the village. Chudleigh, there is some mystery—I fear a dark one—haunting about Maurice Durant. Heaven knows why, but since his return I have never seen him or heard his name without feeling a chill presentiment of coming ill in connection with him. He makes me tremble, yet I cannot help being drawn towards him, and—ah, Chud, let us change the subject. What do you think Mr. Gregson asked me in the stable?"

"Impossible to guess," said Chudleigh.

"He wants me to give him, or rather the village, that piece of ground at the end of the green on which to build a school for the children."

Chudleigh sighed.

"What did you say, sir?" he said, in a low voice. "I did not tell him that every inch of the ground was mortgaged, Chud; I evaded the request and let him think me a close-fisted miser. Oh, Chud, Chud, if you could know what I suffered in being obliged to refuse that Manchester cotton-spinner a piece of ground, and for such a purpose, when he himself, mark you, was willing to spend his gold in building the school, you would pity me."

"I do, sir," said Chudleigh, with a pressure of the hand.

Then they walked on for a few moments absorbed in their own sad thoughts, but suddenly Chudleigh looked up with a hesitating air, and Sir Fielding, reading it in a moment, said:

"What is it, Chud? what are you thinking of?"

"I do not like to tell you, sir," said Chudleigh.

"Why not?" asked Sir Fielding. "Speak out, Chud, speak out."

"Well, if you insist upon it, sir," said Chud, still hesitating. "An idea has just struck me. It pains me to refer to the subject, sir, but I cannot help it."

"You mean the mortgage, Chud?" murmured Sir Fielding, without raising his head.

Chudleigh nodded.

"There seems no lack of money there, sir. Mr. Gregson might—"

Sir Fielding winced as if Chudleigh had struck him an actual blow.

"Don't speak of it, Chud! I'll think it over. Oh, Chud, Chud, the Hall under the thumb of a Manchester cotton-spinner!"

Great was the congratulation at the Folly as to the visit just brought to an end. Mr. Gregson's head was up an inch higher, and his voice, strange to say, a tone lower; perhaps Sir Fielding's soft accents had influenced it. Tom Gregson was in a state of radiant self-satisfaction, and the ladies flushed with pleasure and delight.

"We have to thank you for this pleasant morning, have we not?" murmured Miss Bella in Clarence Hartfield's ear, forgetting her affection in her overwhelming joy.

Clarence Hartfield smiled.

"Eh? Told Sir Fielding that you'd get on well together. I was right, you see. Always am, eh? Mr. Chichester jolly fellow, eh?"

"Oh, very nice!" said the girls, warmly. "So grave and gentlemanly—quite a second edition of Sir Fielding."

"Hot! I thought you'd like him," said Clarence, smiling slowly. "I'm going to have a glass of sherry. Will anybody care to see I don't drink too much?"

Then, with another noiseless laugh, he lounged into the dining-room, where, behind his glass, he could chuckle unobserved and mutter:

"What a dandied, clever fellow you are, Clarence, my boy! Regularly natted the whole of 'em! With Miss Bella and Miss Laynia dandying round him, he won't have much time to dance round Miss Lawley—beautiful Charlotte!—and so leave the course clear for you, Clarence, my boy. Ho! ho! This fellow is not half such a fool as he looks!"

In which latter assertion the reader will perhaps give Mr. Hartfield credit for some truth.

CHAPTER XI.

By the pricking of my thumbs something wicked this way comes.

Shakespeare.

THREE are some parts of Nation Garden, pretty as its name is, where a well-dressed person could not be reasonably secure of retaining his watch and chain, or indeed his life if he did not look well after it. There are courts and alleys cutting through its dark, noisome streets that are blind to mere senses of the

word than one; tall, dark, dirt-stained houses, mysteriously occupied, and guarded as carefully as the Bank of England; and small, disreputable-looking public-houses, behind whose grease-marked doors, which swing with a noiseless, furtive sort of secrecy peculiar to the atmosphere and surroundings, swarthy faces and queerly clad beings sit plotting and planning, drinking and frowning, playing the eternal dominoes, and occasionally stabbing each other with a perseverance in the carrying out foreign manners and customs astounding in this great city of ours.

Wending our way through the close-smelling thoroughfares bordered on each side by dens of misery and filth, at the doors of which lounge dark-hued Italians with blackened pipes in their mouths, or black-eyed, sallow-looking children sulkily squatting in the gutter or the korb, let us penetrate an alley—dark and dismal even in the spring sunset—and, pushing open the low door of the heavy-browed public-house which stands at its end, pass into the small, sawdusted space before the bar.

Three men are standing there, all of them dark, swarthy-visaged, with jet-black, twinkling eyes, the fire in which smokes of fecocity and the quick flashing of cunning. Thin lipped, high cheek-boned, and compact of limb, one would at once judge them Italians. Silently for a time they lounge moodily against the greasy bar and its partition, occasionally lifting their wine-glasses—for they are drinking pure Rhensish, the like of which could not be obtained at any aristocrat's dinner, imported, stored, and sold only to his own particular customers by the Italian landlord of this dirty public-house—and puffing at the tiny cigarettes which they hold between their white teeth.

At last the eldest one glanced at the clock, stretched himself, and said, in the patois of an Italian village:

"He is late."

"When is he not? Tell me, Picté," retorted the second, flinging himself down upon the hard wooden bench and supporting his head upon his long, sinewy hand.

"Your English is always late!" said the third. "He is all promise but no perform. He will wear you to punctuality with an eagerness and solemnity sublime, and keep you waiting half an hour after his own time. Bah! Baptiste, Picté, be patient. You have not endured this abominable climate nor its detestable people so long as I, Jean, have. When you have you will take these things as the English themselves do—quietly," and with a gleam of his white teeth the third lifted his glass to his mouth and drained it.

"Know you ought of this mission, Baptiste?" asked Picté when the landlord at a signal from Jean had filled the glasses and returned to his perusal of an Italian newspaper in a corner of the bar.

"Not a scrap," was the reply. "It is some move of Spazzola's. He told me to wait with you two here till six, and he would come with the instructions; but, by Saint Paul! it is near seven, and I am wearied to the death!"

"It will not be safe to go," muttered Picté. "What say you—shall we wait, Jean?"

"Why do you ask?" smiled Jean. "You know it is more than our necks are worth to trifle with Spazzola. He tells you, me to be here—we are here. He does not come—we wait. What else were work?"

"Pa! You are ill-grained this evening, Fratello Jean. Wine, wine for Jean, that it may soak his humour down!"

"St—er!" hissed Baptiste, between his teeth. "Cease snarling, wolves—the lion comes!" and he flashed his eyes at the door, which opened at the moment and admitted a tall, fierce-looking Italian, half concealed by a ragged cloak and a sombrero hat, followed by a short, thick-set Englishman whose flat, bulldog features, short oily hair, suit of corduroy, and well-worn velvetene, blue spotted neckcloth, and heavy-soled boots proclaimed him at once a brother of the fraternity whose unexpected midnight visits at wealthy mansions result in compulsory absence from their native land for the benefit of their own morals and their country's well-being.

In short, the Italian's companion was a ticket-of-leave man, and looked as if plainly as if he had stitched the ticket on the breast of his short, useful jacket.

Raising his eyebrows as a token of recognition, the Italian sauntered up to the bar and directed a quick gesture at the ticket-of-leave man.

"A go of gin," said he, in a hoarse voice, apparently proceeding from the region of his thick boots. "Hot!" he added, then stood regarding the three Italians with side glances from his small, sharp-set eyes, that were near akin to his own.

The steaming glass of fiery liquor disposed of at one gulp, and a glass of wine having been finished by the Italian, the latter, nodding to the three others, took the ticket-of-leave man's arm and walked through a low doorway into a dark room followed by the three others.

The door of this apartment Jean carefully bolted

then, taking a whistle from his pocket, blew three soft calls.

After two minutes' waiting a portion of the floor at the corner of a room was raised in the shape of a trap-door, and, still without speaking, the five men went down—the trap-door closing after them as noiselessly as it had opened.

At the foot of the ladder by which they had descended was an apartment something between a cellar and tap-room, the walls being unpapered and filled with the mould of damp, and the floor covered with thick sawdust over which the feet made no noise. Two or three tables, a wooden bench, and a few chairs comprised the furniture of the room, if one omits the broken bottles and glasses and a small tin frame for candles dangling from the roof.

"Now," said Spazzola, dropping into a chair and motioning to the rest to follow his example. "Now we are safe, let's to business. First, Mon Piété, Baptiste, Jean, let me introduce you to a brother. His name is Bill, his profession is—ours. *Il mio amico*, these are my brothers. So! it is good!" he exclaimed as the man introduced as Bill rose slowly from his chair, expectorated, grasped the hands held out to him and then sat down again with the air of one who had undergone much in the cause of politeness.

"Baptiste, we will drink."

Baptiste rose, and, touching a spring, summoned a dwarfish, ill-looking ruffian, who came from a side door let into the wood in the manner of a reptile dropping from the roof, and taking their orders returned in a few minutes with a bottle of wine and enough gin to last several "goes," then, disappearing, left the party free to continue the conversation.

"Any news, Jean?" asked the one called Spazzola, who seemed by his manner and tone to hold the position of head.

"None, Spazzola!" replied Jean. "None, save that money is scarce, wine dear, and our hands idle."

"All which ill's I came to dissipate!" retorted Spazzola. "I have news—perhaps because, unlike you, I seek it. Hands are idle when they seek no work, money is scarce when it is not chased, and wine—bah! wine is always dear while a rogue keeps the cellar. So! I have news," said I, "and good news. Piété, your head, so long held down like a beat cur's tail, shall raise itself like a padrone's."

"Jean, your dry throat can, an you choose, lap Rheish all the day; and you, oh, slender-waisted, calf-eyed Baptiste, shall have gold enough to deck a dozen green-eyed Marias."

And with a short laugh he caught up the glass and emptied it, while the three men, suddenly aroused from their lithargic attitude, bent forward across the table and fixed their glittering eyes upon his mocking face.

"It is time," muttered Jean, sinking back into his chair and lowering his eyes. "Hungry dogs grow impatient."

"And yelp!" retorted Spazzola. "Enough, amico. The prelude is over—for the time. Piété, you little think of the trouble, the labour, the travail your Spazzola undergoes to feed you. You little know the danger. So! enough, I said. For three weeks I have left you to try the chase. Ay, for three weeks or all but a day, with no luck, but your waiting horse wins. Is it not so, *il mio amico*?" he inquired, turning to the Englishman, who nodded surlily.

"And on the last day, moaning but yesterday-night, I came across my friend here, who was looking far and wide for Spazzola and his lambs. That we met was a chance, for I had dropped into a crowd to try my luck with the pockets when I saw him relieving a too trustful idiot of his trinkets. We went to the kitchen at Whitechapel, stayed the night, and arranged an undertaking which, by the holy Mary, shall line our girdles. Listen. There is—Stop; let our friend relate himself the plan of the campaign, for he is generalissimo."

And he slapped the ticket-of-leave man on the shoulder.

Pell got up with a clumsy movement, strangely contrasting with the graceful play of the Italian's limbs, and said, suddenly, stopping to gulp some gin:

"What I got to say won't take half the time you've been palavering in—it's as plain as a pike-staff and as straight as a jemmy. Your mate here come across me o'ly faken the other loom, and being palish I asked him to go in with a little affair I had on hand. He seemed agreeable if so be I'd take on three more, and, as it's allers in affairs of this kind the more on us the merrier, I agreed."

"And the plot—the affair?" asked Jean, eagerly.

"Is this," replied Bill, looking cautiously round, and lowering his voice till, what with its hoarseness and burglar slang, the three could scarcely follow him. "Down in the country, inland, there's a jolly fine chance of gamey bit o' cribbing. It's a old house, reglar matchbox stuff to get through, and I believe crammed full o' awag. The only man as lives in it is a crazed parson o' some sort; him and a

woman as is deaf and dumb are the only people livin' in it. There's a dawg, but I'd manage him. I'm good at dawgs. Next to the crib itself is a big 'all and several other 'ouses, tidy-sized, so that we could go in for a hatfull if so be you'd pluck to run it. Anyhow, this ere alone's a good pull and a safe one, and if you'll stand by a cove, play fair—mind no splitting or shirking—we shall collar a lot o' awag."

Breathlessly the men listened, following each word with charmed ears and flashing eyes.

"What sort?" asked Baptiste, in a whisper.

"Plate!" replied the burglar. "Solid lumps, old-fashioned. I've been told that there's chests and chests, cupboards and cupboards full of it."

The Italians rose to their feet with a gesture of excitement, but Spazzola's raised hand warned them into calmness.

"The cove in the crib is a strong 'un. I've se'd him—went down a purpose. He'd be a tight bit if he turned crusty. There ain't to be no shirking."

A sudden gesture of the Italians interrupted him. They raised their hands, and the steel blades of three stilettos flashed in the dimness.

"Right you are!" croaked the burglar, holding out his fist. "Give us your fins."

(To be continued.)

FOREBODED.

Now, in the ghostly brightness

Of the Winter drawing near,

The boding and December chaunts

The death song of the year;

While the golden rod and the sumac

Their kindling torches wave

In the van of the funeral pageant

That beareth him to the grave

Where low in her lonely chamber

The beautiful Spring-time lies,

Ashes of death on the gold of her hair,

And dust on the blue of her eyes;

Where the fallen Summer sleepeth,

Nor dreams of her empire lost,

Her broken sceptre slipping down

From her fair hands idly crossed.

Nor heeds she the wild complaining

Of the sombre sea afar,

And the gusty sorrow of mountain pines

Under the Evening Star;

Nor the hollow moan of the woodlands;

The winds, mysterious grief,

Nor the monotone of brooks that chaunt

The fall of the fading leaf.

No more in the sunny hollows

The painted hare-bell glows,

And the feet of the white rain tramples out

The red of the dying rose;

And yonder the leafy summits

Flash with a stealthy fire,

Fanned by the Angel of Frost that lights

The Autumn's funeral pyre. E. A. B.

SCIENCE.

THE first order for lithotractor for blasting purposes in the Great St. Gothard Tunnel has just been given, and amounts to twenty-five tons. It is calculated that the extent of the work, together with the hardness of the stone, will render at least 1,500 tons of this explosive necessary to complete the tunnel.

A VERY common preventive for boiler scale used in America is ground logwood, a little of which placed in a steam boiler is very serviceable. A new preventive is announced in this country—to wit, the leaves of the bearberry, a wild trailing plant common in England and Scotland. The leaves are said to contain gallic and tannic acid.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE STEAM ENGINE.—The Patent Office has lately purchased, and recently published, two deeds, dated respectively 1779 and 1799, relating to the erection by Boulton and Watt of steam engines at Gwennap, in Cornwall, and Werneth Colliery, near Oldham. They are interesting as giving details as to the terms on which the engines were to be erected and worked, and as to the cost of construction.

STRYCHNIA FOR BLINDNESS.—Professor Nagel of Tubingen has published reports of cases in which he has, by the use of strychnia, restored sight to patients suffering from decay of vision or from blindness. Strychnia, as is well known, is a deadly poison, but it has a wonderful effect in stimulating the nerves, and Professor Nagel found that in diseases of the optic nerve, whether functional or organic, its operation was alike speedy and efficacious. The quantity used is of course exceedingly small—one-fortieth of a grain—mixed with water,

and this solution is not to be swallowed, but is injected under the skin of one of the arms, which seems to render the result more remarkable. This remedy has also been tried by oculists elsewhere, and with marked success.

NEW KIND OF GUNPOWDER.—A novel description of gunpowder, possessing extraordinary projectile power, is said to have been recently adopted by the Prussian Artillery. It is composed of a certain proportion of nitre and sawdust, and in this state can be kept in store without fear of explosion. To render this composition explosive it is necessary to add a sufficient quantity of sulphuric acid to make it cohere, and when dried it is ready for use. This composition has certainly the advantage of cheapness, combined with extreme simplicity in its manufacture, and is said to leave but little residue after being fired.

FUEL ECONOMY.—PEAT IN ITALY.—The peat deposits in Italy cover an area of upwards of 40,000 hectares (in round numbers 100,000 acres), and average in thickness from five to six metres, although in some places, as in the Roman Campagna, deposits 25 metres, or 84 yards in thickness are to be met with. Up to the present time, from the impossibility of compressing the peat to a greater density than from 200 to 300 kilogrammes per cubic metre, it has been impossible for this fuel to compete with foreign coal in Italy. Signor Giovanni Mozo, after a series of patient and careful experiments, has succeeded in making machinery by which peat coal of a density of 1,000 kilogrammes, about one ton, per cubic metre can be produced and sold at from 18 to 18 francs (12s. to 14s.) per ton. Experiments on the Lombard railways show the value of Signor Mozo's invention, which, with the present high price of coal, cannot fail to be a most important one for Italy, tending to free her from the immense tribute (40,000,000 francs yearly) that she pays to other nations for fuel, and to enable her to develop her natural resources.

MANUFACTURE OF SUGAR FROM BEETROOT IN ITALY.—Professor Peyron, the well-known agricultural chemist, in his evidence before the "Lucchesa Industriale," now being held in Turin, states that, with regard to agricultural industries in Italy, few countries can be said to be more behindhand, and the manufacture of products derived from the production of the soil is as yet in its infancy. The government have endeavoured to introduce the cultivation of various new plants, such as cotton, the esparto grass, etc., but without success, and of late a great effort has been made in Italy to encourage the growth of the sugar beet, and to teach the farmers carefully the general treatment of the land for the cultivation of this root, so as to produce heavy crops, rich in sugar. Professor Peyron expresses his opinion that Italy will never become a sugar-producing country, as the juicy root, although rich in sugar, is not easily crystallized, and that other crops can be grown with far more profit than the beetroot. A series of experiments made in Tuscany, Naples, and Lombardy, by himself and Signor Peria, gave in some cases a production of 12½ per cent. of sugar and, on the average, from 10 to 10½ per cent.

BAMBOO PAPER.—The Consul-General at the Havana has recently called attention to the enormous quantities of fibrous vegetables which the island of Cuba produces. Some papermakers have made experiments, it is said with success, on the fibre of the bamboo, and on some of the creeping plants indigenous to the island. The bamboo has been devoted to the service of literature as long as the papyrus itself. More than 2,000 years before the Christian era the conquerors of China signalled the establishment of a new dynasty in the Flowery Land by a conflagration of the national records. These documents were written on plates of bamboo. How far they went back takes us almost beyond the Flood. The dynasties of Yu, Chang, and Chea had inscribed their records on bamboo plates for a thousand years before their barbarous destruction under the reign of the Thain kings. Books of this primitive nature may be seen among the curiosities in the King's Library at the British Museum. But to use the plant, not as wood, but as paper, to tear asunder the durable and jagged fibres only that they may be felted together in a finer and closer union—to supersede the toil of the chiffonnier by that of the cane cutter—is a new application of an old material. It would be of great utility to those who are making experiments of this nature on the utilization of the vegetable fibre to make themselves acquainted with the mode and materials of manufacture now used in Japan. Paper, in that wonderful island empire, serves purposes unknown in literary Europe. It is hard as *papier maché*, or soft and delicate as cambric. It is there used for manufactures as diversified as they are numerous.

A RICH naphtha spring has been discovered in the province of Caserta, near Naples, and is now being worked by a Milanese firm.



[VON SCHUBERT'S WOOING.]

THE SECRET OF SCHWARZENBURG.

CHAPTER XVI.

He spoke of love—such love as spirits feel
In worlds whose course is equable and pure;
No fears to beat away, no strife to heal,
The past unshared for and the future sure.

Wordsworth.

"You have a story to tell me," said the Baron Valentin, courteously. "Well, if I am a voluble talker I have the compensating merit of being also an admirable listener. Let me hear it by all means, Herr Dalberg."

Aubrey was a little disturbed by Lady Viola's manner, and not inclined to make any farther communications, but his own ardent desire to explain to his fair unknown the meaning of that coat-of-arms induced him to repeat the story in as brief terms as possible, meantime watching every shade of expression on his listener's face.

The baron's manner of receiving it was somewhat difficult to decipher. Now he smiled proudly, and anon his face darkened, but upon the whole he appeared singularly pleased.

He rose quietly and, walking to a secretaire, unlocked a drawer, took out a piece of paper, and brought it back to the young man.

"Is that the drawing she gave you?"

"The very same!" answered Aubrey, eagerly, holding it up, and comparing it, line by line, with the armorial device emblazoned a dozen times on the several articles of furniture around him.

"Yes, Roderich took it out of the pocket-book with the other private papers. We thought you had copied it yourself, and I laid it away in the drawer yonder. So she drew it herself and could not guess its meaning?"

"It is the Schwarzenburg device!" exclaimed Aubrey, in profound amazement.

"Yes, it is the Schwarzenburg crest," replied the baron.

"Do you know who she is? Does Lady Viola know?" demanded Aubrey.

"I have no question about her identity. And you say she is beautiful and charming. Heaven speed Stephano's wooing!" returned the baron, walking to the window, rubbing his hands together softly.

A sudden red swept into Aubrey Dalberg's face.

"Do you mean that your son has gone to marry this girl? Your daughter gave me to understand that his object was to procure an important witness in your behalf."

"It was for both objects, my dear young friend—

one certainly as important as the other. So you have seen her. That makes her seem less like a myth. It was so many years before I dreamed of her existence that I could never fully realize it. And she is young and lovely, but unsophisticated evidently, and kept secluded. The more propitious for Stephano, who has quick wits and a generous heart with his good looks!"

Aubrey clenched his hands on the arm of the chair. His blood was burning and tingling in every vein.

Was this the help he had given them—this sending another to win the beautiful maiden who had reigned queen of his thoughts, star of his hopes, ever since she had welcomed him as the expected prince?

The baron could not fail to perceive his discomposure.

"You are not pleased, I see, Herr Dalberg, yet I cannot see any reason for it."

"I am not," returned Aubrey, quickly. "I grow every moment more impatient of this restraint, more disgusted with the whole affair."

The baron reddened, and stood for a moment irresolute.

"Besides," continued Aubrey, coldly, "what do I know of Stephano? What satisfactory assurance have I that he is worthy of this good and gentle girl? I am in a measure responsible for the result since I have been the unconscious means of bringing it about. I cannot think it is well or rightly done that he has gone masquerading in my name. I insist upon a full explanation of who and what she is."

"Insist!" repeated the baron, haughtily, his temple flushing; "that is a singular word for Herr Dalberg to use."

"Perhaps Von Schubert would not think so," answered Aubrey, walking hastily to the door and laying his hand on the key. "You may believe me nothing but a drivelling idiot, ready to cower with fear before your threats. I confess my senseless acquiescence in your plot has given you reason for it. But I assure you it was only a natural sympathy with what seemed to be injured and worthy innocence. Besides, your daughter's appeal to my compassion awoke the honourable chivalry which lies dormant in every true man's breast, and urged me to resign myself contentedly, since the mischief was done. Now, however, I recognize another and more powerful call. I must return promptly. I will not remain here quietly another day."

The resolutely glistening eye, the firm bearing of the young man seemed to fill the baron with consternation and dismay.

"Good Heavens, Herr Dalberg, what can you mean? What have I said or done to give such of-

fence to you? Be seated, I pray you, and I will answer any and all of your questions," he cried, incoherently.

Aubrey quietly withdrew the key from the lock and put it in his pocket, then walked forward and seated himself on the nearest chair.

"Who is this young girl?" he asked.

"She is the Baroness Schwarzenburg," answered the Baron Valentin, tremulously.

Aubrey felt a little chilly thrill steal over him at the momentous import of this intelligence, but he kept the same stern, resolute expression of countenance.

"How can you identify her by my description?" he continued.

"Because you bring the armorial device on the paper, and especially by the mark upon the wrist, which you tell me a bracelet hides. I do not ask better proof now that I have learned of her existence."

This last allusion led Aubrey to remember the strange effect that his own birth-mark had produced upon Lady Viola.

Baring his arm hastily, he held it before the baron's astonished eyes.

"There are other wrists that bear the same mark. See!"

The baron seized his arm with a grip that left its purple mark behind, and stared down upon it as if unable to credit his own eyesight. He pulled out his eyeglass, and held it over it.

Aubrey bent down and looked with him, wondering meanwhile at the stupidity he had shown in never making such an examination of himself before. He turned deadly pale as he gazed.

Lo! the blur spread out into distinct and symmetrical lines—it was not a careless blot, a freak of nature. He saw in a moment that it was an indelible stamp.

The baron's hand shook, and the eyeglass dropped.

"Let me bring a powerful magnifying glass that is in the library," he implored.

Aubrey opened the door, and let him out. He returned promptly, with Viola behind him, who stared and shrugged her shoulders as she saw the young man's guardianship of the door-key.

The glass revealed what seemed almost a miracle. There was no longer a doubt. What seemed little accidental dots and jagged lines came out distinct and clear upon the smooth, fair skin.

There was the coat-of-arms again, the third time for that day before his eyes, with a new significance.

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed Aubrey Dalberg. "The crest of Schwarzenburg, and indelibly stamped on my wrist!"

His own amazement was too evident to be doubted. His face was ghastlier than the baron's and his hand trembled more violently.

"What is the meaning of all this?" stammered the baron.

"Another mystery added to the already burdened annals of Schwarzenburg," quoth Lady Viola's clear, sarcastic voice. "For my part, my father, I am tired of trying to read them."

"You said you were born of English parentage," complained the baron, turning indignantly upon Aubrey.

"So I did, and so I suppose. I have a loving and tender mother now at home. My father died a year and more ago. Never for an instant have I questioned my parentage."

And here Aubrey paused, struck dumb by a remembrance that came up to him and gathered significance.

What was it the dying Dalberg had tried to tell him with such a piteous look in his glaring eye? His mother had persuaded him that it was only the wanderings of a fallen mind.

Might it not have been something in reference to this strange mark, whose microscopic characters were revealed only by the powerful aid of the magnifying glass?

There had been something too in his mother's manner.

Aubrey was uneasy, and vaguely disquieted, and the baron even more so.

"Viola," said he, "the silver brand ought to be among the heirlooms. Go, sing to Von Schubert, charm him into good humour, and coax him to take you to the treasures. Once freely handling them I will trust your woman's wit to secrets the brand about your person. I shall have no peace until I try if it fits that mark."

Viola was in no wise loth.

A rich colour came to her cheeks, her eyes sparkled, and at the door she turned and said, half it would seem in menace, half in exultation:

"Remember, it is by your order I go, Baron Baer; it is your wish that I should charm Herr Von Schubert. Blame me not for what comes of it."

Her father scarcely took in the meaning of the words. He was examining again with closest attention the significant mark upon the young man's wrist.

"If it should be," he muttered, gloomily.

"I think I have fallen into the castle of mystery!" exclaimed Aubrey, impatiently, "and all things have grown misty and unreal to me. I would have staked my life a few weeks since upon my own identity and my mother's good faith with me. Now—and here he broke into a troubled, bitter laugh, "now I dare not even swear that my name is my own!"

The baron was pacing slowly to and fro. He turned at this speech as if he thought some answer was expected of him.

"Indeed," he said; "and I dare not tell you what wild conjectures are dazing me. It is inexplicable, thoroughly inexplicable!"

"I wonder if Doctor Ments can tell me anything," muttered Aubrey. "The old man certainly had a singular way when I went to him with my mother's letter."

"Ments? our German physician, do you mean?" questioned the baron, sharply.

"The same. My mother was very particular that I should go and see him. It seems she had pleasant and kindly memories of him."

"Then your mother has been in Germany?"

"Certainly. My parents spent three years in the Fatherland. I have always understood that I was born at Berlin. It was one reason that induced me to come this way instead of following the direct route."

"It makes the thing more probable," muttered the baron. "If Ments knows anything he can be forced to speak."

Then he fell again into his pacing walk, while Aubrey sat with forehead resting on his clasped hands, bewildered and distressed by the wild ideas that thronged upon him.

Meantime Viola had glided swiftly downstairs, carefully glanced over the rooms, and, finding them empty, had passed out of doors. She saw Von Schubert's tall figure standing in the garden, with rings of silvery smoke from his meerschaum floating around his head.

Then as she came near the walk in which he stood she slackened her steps, folded her arms, and seemed to be walking abstractedly, unconscious of aught around her.

He heard her step, and turned, his swarthy cheek flushing, his eye brightening, in spite of his efforts to the contrary.

"Lady Viola, it is long since I have seen you here. Your devotion to your invalid brother has been untiring, yet I am glad for your own health's sake to see you out in the fresh air again," he said, remov-

ing the meerschaum from his lips and bowing with something beyond respectful courtesy.

She gave a little start, as if thus for the first time aware of his vicinity.

"Ah, it is you, Herr Von Schubert. Yes, I have come for the fresh air; I am weary, thirsty, stifled!"

There was a tragic intonation in the rich voice that appealed to the man's quick sensibilities.

"It is no wonder, my lady; it is a dreary life for one so young and gifted, and—pardon me—so wondrously beautiful."

"But it is a life I cannot escape, that it is my duty to endure," she ventured, softly.

The voice was gentleness itself.

Von Schubert's heart throbbed. How long it had been since she had spoken thus in friendliness!

"Are you sure your first duty is not to secure your own happiness?" he asked.

"My own happiness? Ah, whither should I go for it?" murmured the beautiful siren, her head drooping, the long, jetty eyelashes sweeping low upon the scarlet cheek.

"Would you allow me to show you?" ventured Von Schubert, his admiring eye losing no single attribute of maidenly loveliness before him. "Oh, Lady Viola, do not be angry with me, your gentleness makes me bold."

She half turned her graceful head. A tremulous weakness was in the murmuring voice.

"I am so tired, Herr Von Schubert, that I have no strength to wear my mask of haughtiness and scorn. There is a limit to human endurance, I am weak and vulnerable to-day. You must not tempt me. Go away, and leave me to recover my strength."

As she spoke she sank down indolently upon the grassy bank, the round, white arms falling listlessly over her lap.

A far less imperious man would have resisted a dismissal in that languid voice. Von Schubert's dark face kindled with passionate love and an almost triumphant joy as he moved nearer.

"Lady Viola, dear Lady Viola, your sweet confession thrills me with new hope. Your coldness and pride and haughtiness to your wild adorer, your devoted servant are then a mask which hides your true sentiments! I too am tired, tired and sick at heart, waiting for a single tender word from the lips that hold a fiat for me more momentous than anything my royal master can do or say. Give me one little ray of hope, Lady Viola."

He flung himself down upon the bank at her feet, and looked imploringly into her face. No rose, gasping into his agitated face, could question the strength and sincerity of the overmastering passion which consumed him.

Still she hung her head and twisted the white fingers nervously together.

"You know how deeply I love you, Lady Viola," he went on, in a low, fervent tone. "You know that I linger here, like a miserable coward, only to catch a glimpse now and then of your face—to hear your voice, even though it speak but angry and bitter words. You know that you have disarmed my just resentment against your father—softened the wrath and hatred that were kindled with my earliest breath—made me half despise myself, and yet cling, caressing the chains that fetter and degrade me. You know all this—why do I tell it to you? And yet, Viola, you have never yet given me a pitying word."

"Have I not?" murmured she, softly; "that shows what implicit obedience I have yielded to duty. Herr Von Schubert, my father's daughter should not have a pitying word—she is culpable if she allows a secret friendly word for the father of Schwarzenburg Heights."

He frowned and bit his lip, then returned, impetuously:

"Am I not compelled to obey the royal mandate? Moreover, is it not for all your good that I remain? Another man selected by the prince would be likely to be cruel, harsh, and tyrannical, without authority here. It is for your sake I remain, fair Viola."

"Is it true? then I thank you for it, Herr Von Schubert. Would that I might credit all you have spoken."

"What do you doubt?" he asked, earnestly.

"You say that I have softened your resentment, disarmed the family feud of its power. Herr Von Schubert, that is scarcely true. You watch us still with lynx-eyed vigilance. You are scrupulously faithful, in the minutest particular, to the interests of our enemy."

"By Heaven! it may be true in the letter—being honourable standing requires it—but in the spirit I stand convicted before myself as guilty and faithless!" he returned, fiercely. "I am tempted again and again to fling myself at your feet, and to seek to win your favour by the most dastardly treachery. I am insane enough often to offer to fly with your father to a foreign land; if only that fair hand of

yours would be given as reward—to forsake honours and fortune and country for you."

All this time she had refrained from looking at him. Now she lifted her eyes, and slowly turned their dazzling, melting splendour upon him.

What he read there seemed to fill him with an almost insane ecstasy.

He caught the hem of her dress and covered it with wild kisses.

"Viola, Viola, you cannot hide it any longer. My great love has kindled a response."

She dropped her face into her clasping hands with a low cry.

"What have I said? What have I done?" she sobbed. "It cannot be, you know it cannot be. You, Herr Von Schubert, and I, the daughter of Valentin, Baron Baer! Oh, it is cruel of you to stay when I am weak and tired and shorn of all my courage. Go. You are my father's jailer and mine."

"Nay, nay, sweet trembler, sweeter and lovelier and more restless in this womanly mood than in your queenliest pride and haughtiness," pleaded Von Schubert, losing all his stateliness and self-command. "The only lock I would turn upon you would be the key that would secure your safety in my heart. I am no longer your father's enemy, and yours I never was. By Heaven! I repeat what would cost me my head if one of these guards should hear it! I repeat it! Viola, you know I am rich and powerful, and thoroughly trusted by the prince, and therefore also by his majesty the king. I will insure what I offered but now. I will transform my fortune to England—all that is available. It will be enough for all our rational wants. And I will save your father—all, all! And believe me it will be no light task, no common risk; but I swear I will do it if you will love me and become my wife."

His whole figure was shaken by the great emotion which such a mental struggle induced.

Viola looked at him almost wonderingly.

"Oh, what heroic devotion. What knightly love," she said, mentally. "Can the world offer me anything more precious?"

Aloud she answered, in a fluttering voice:

"Let me have time to think of this, Herr Von Schubert. And give me proof of your sincerity by unlocking the escritoire of heirlooms for me. I have a curiosity to see the silver brand that has had such famous history in the Schwarzenburg line. Thank Heaven, it never disfigured a wrist of mine. Let me take the brand. I give you my word that it shall be safely returned."

"You shall have it. But, Viola, am I not to have one word of hope? You know how this wild passion fevers my blood yet it does not cool lightly as might be with a younger man. I suffer tortures while doubting and fearing. Lady Viola, give me some sort of answer, I pray you. Do you love me?"

She yielded her hand to his bold grasp, and whispered back:

"Do not ask me yet. Give me time to think. Is it not enough for me to say that I—do—not—hate you as I did?"

A radiant smile broke over his dark, stern face.

"The next step is love!" he cried, exultantly.

"Come and take the silver brand, and leave me happy with this orb of comfort."

While yet Aubrey and the baron sat in blank silence the girl swept in upon them.

Another time the father might have noted suspiciously how her eyes shone and her cheeks burnt, but now he was too preoccupied with the present dilemma. She tossed the quaintly carved silver toy upon the table.

Aubrey looked at it curiously. To a common eye it was an unintelligible puzzle, a blotch of the most infinitesimal carving. The magnifying glass showed him it was an exquisitely cut stamp perfectly copying the Schwarzenburg crest.

He laid it lightly on the mark which marked his wrist, and it just covered the discoloured oval.

"The silver brand has been in the Schwarzenburg family for nearly two hundred years," said the dusky voice of Baron Valentin. "At birth the eldest child of the oldest child has always been stamped upon the wrist with this brand. Its counterpart has never been known, and this has been jealously guarded. I myself, not being of the direct line, nor at the time of birth at all likely to become the heir here, had no call for it. None of my children bore it. The last baron of course received the mark at his birth; his eldest child should also bear the same stamp. It is only recently that I have suspected the existence of a concealed heir. I have been assured that it was a daughter, and Stephanie has gone to marry her. Now, I pray you, give me some clue to explain how I find the same with you."

Aubrey drew a long, quivering breath. "It is a profound mystery. It is thoroughly inexplicable. Let me go home, and ask an explanation of my mother," he faltered.

"Your faith in your claim to the name of Dalberg is not so strong; but some secret conviction has shaken it," said the baron. "Good Heavens, how a little knowledge will open the eyes." I laughed at Viola when she insisted that you had the look of the old Baron Max; but I see it now—I see it only too plainly."

Aubrey was dumb beneath the pressure of conflicting thoughts, and the baron began pacing the room again.

Suddenly the monotonous tramp ceased, and the baron laid a hand tightly on his shoulder.

"My friend, I see a happy solution for us all. Pardon the abruptness of the proposal. Marry my daughter and be the master of Schwarzenburg, whether you have rightful claim or not."

Viola turned her head quickly and looked eagerly into his face.

She was interested—keenly so—in the answer, and could scarcely tell whether it gave her pain or pleasure.

He was young and handsome, gifted in mind, and noble of heart.

It was true her girlish fancy had at first gone out to him, but this afternoon had shown her such a strength and passion of devotion, such an utter self-abnegation, that she read Aubrey's listlessness and indifference in their true light.

Her eye flashed proudly then when she heard him answer, indignantly:

"I beg your pardon, my lord; but my heart's love and happiness are not to be bartered or driven hither or thither by interested motives. I do not love the Lady Viola, however I may admire and respect her."

"Nor could Viola love you," rejoined the girl, calmly. "Dear father, spare yourself farther scheming. All shall be arranged satisfactorily."

The baron drew a long sigh.

"But I must be set at liberty. You must give me free egress from this place. I must hasten home as quickly as I can find means to go," said Aubrey, firmly. "I must leave to-morrow. Two months and more are long enough time to have given you."

"To-morrow!" repeated the baron, in consternation. "It will take two weeks to arrange so delicate and dangerous a matter. Remember, Von Schubert must be outwitted, and I must contrive to send a message that Roderich will understand, and—"

"He shall go to-morrow if he likes," spoke up Viola, calmly. "Leave Von Schubert to me, my father, and trouble yourself in no way about the arrangements. At last I see my way clear, and read my own heart aright."

As she spoke the last words she caught up the silver brand and swept out of the room.

The baron passed his hand wearily across his forehead.

"All this is perplexing and very wearing. I am completely exhausted of strength. Perhaps it is best, as she says, that we should spare ourselves the worry if her plans are well matured. I pray you rest calmly if you can, my friend. I must go to my own chamber for a little sleep."

"Let me look the door behind you. I must be my own jailer in future," said Aubrey, kindly. "But I promise to remain here quietly until the morning reveals what Lady Viola's promise is worth."

CHAPTER XVII.

"Oh, Heaven, that lends me life,

Send me a heart replete with thankfulness."

Schubert's voice.

STRAIGHT downward towards the flashing blue water shot the balloon, and with dizzy brains and gasping for breath the pair of hapless aerial voyagers sought to fortify themselves against the terrible shock which they knew must so speedily come.

While he held firmly to the edge of the little ear the aeronaut clutched also a dense clump, hoping vaguely that it might serve some way in the emergency.

Just however as the collapsing globe arrived within a few feet of the water a strong current, that was blowing close to the surface, swept it along, tilting it to and fro so that it was with the utmost difficulty they could save themselves from being thrown out.

Then they were whirled along over the bank, dragging against the tops of the tall trees that grew there, and shot blindly along just above the shrubbery. The aeronaut uttered an exclamation of thanksgiving, and the lady, opening her eyes and looking down, made a movement as if to leap downward, but her companion clutched her desperately.

"It would be the height of madness to leap out. I hope we shall catch in the bough of a tree. We are going lower, and lower. Keep a brave heart; the worst, I am sure, is over."

His prophecy proved a true one.

Swept along on the rude, jolting course, but nearer and nearer the ground, the outstretching bough of a huge walnut tree entangled itself in the torn silk of

the balloon, and arrested its course momentarily, but long enough to give the aeronaut an opportunity of fling his rope over the bough and secure it before the balloon could make its escape.

"Now may Heaven be praised for its mercy!" he exclaimed.

The white lips beside him shaped a voiceless thanksgiving as the lady stood up and took hold of the bough to steady herself, since, of course, the car was left without support.

"Wait a moment, and I will manage a safe descent for you," he said, springing nimbly himself to catch a limb, and swinging over it into the fork of the trunk. The next moment he added, hastily:

"We are close to a road of some sort, and there is a grand carriage with liveried servants waiting there. I think they have been watching our fall, and the gentleman in the coach seems to be directing some investigation. What will you do? I am sure they will be down upon us in a moment. If you had only a veil."

"I must get into the tree," she answered, promptly. "Reach me that bough, and your hand."

And the next moment she was crouching among the foliage, with her arms clasped tightly about the trunk.

"Can you remain comfortably?" he asked, while he cut hastily at the bough and rope which restrained the ruined balloon.

"I can, I am sure. Take away this white mantle!"

The car fell crashing to the ground, and the tattered remnant of the aeronaut's pride dropped sullenly after it.

"My poor Bird of the Air!" he murmured, sorrowfully, as he dragged the debris some yards away from the tree.

It was none too soon, for two liveried men came at that moment crashing through the tall clump of bushes, bordered the road, and concealed it from the field in which the hapless "Bird of the Air" had landed.

"Any harm done?" asked one.

The aeronaut pointed to the forlorn remnants, and shook his head sorrowfully.

"Humph!" growled the other. "I shouldn't mourn over that trash. We expected to find a heap of broken bones here. My master sent us to help you. He thought there was a woman in the balloon."

"I had my wife's scarf," said the aeronaut, coolly. "I see it to signal with. I don't think I need anything except a cart to carry off what is left of my balloon and to convey me home. It's a dear enough experiment I've had."

The fellows looked at each other and laughed scornfully.

"I wonder if we look like hunting for carts for every cast-away Gottlieb," said one. "Perhaps he'd like the coach itself."

"You needn't trouble yourself. I can trudge along and find one for myself if you'll be good enough to tell me where I am."

"You're on the grounds of the Count Schrodter, and it is his lordship in the coach yonder with his guest at dinner, his royal highness the prince," answered the man, loftily, evidently expecting the humble listener to be overwhelmed by the near vicinity of such august grandeur.

The aeronaut was not so startled, however, as the clanging listener in the tree, whose sudden shiver set the leaves in a rustle which might have attracted attention thither but that, at the moment, rang out a sharp voice from the other side of the hedge.

"Blockheads! outstiff! where are you? Why don't one of you come and report to me? I told you to bring the woman out to the carriage."

The lady, peering from her high perch among the shrouding trees, saw the flushed, brutal face that was thrust between the hazel boughs, but to the group around the wreck it was invisible.

The flunkies, however, speedily dropped their pompous manner, and both rushed back to the hedge, ejaculating together:

"There is no lady, your lordship. The man is alone, and he isn't dead at all, and the balloon is torn to pieces."

"No woman? why, I'd swear I saw a pale face, and a pretty one, over the edge of the car. Ho, ho, your highness, here's a pretty go! Which of us has lost the bet? If there's no woman at all she can't be old and ugly or young and pretty. It is a deuced shame to lose that club supper in such a way. But I've won on the man; he's alive and on his feet—the better for him and for me too."

And with a heartless laugh he turned and went back to the coach.

"And that is your Count Schrodter is it?" queried the aeronaut, looking up with an indignant flash of the eyes.

"Yes, sirrah; that is Count Sebastian Schrodter."

"He is a fine specimen of German nobility, a very fine specimen," pursued the aeronaut. "It was quite an

entertainment, so it seems, for him and his royal guest—like a horse race or a rowing match; and they had their chance for betting on the result, while my balloon was dropping down, threatening to mangle and kill a fellow being, according to their expectations. It was a kindly thing for them to send and see if I was dead or alive—to settle the bet."

The stinging sarcasm of this speech was not wholly lost upon the Schrodter menials, dull and shallow as they were.

"Humph!" muttered one, "you're a stranger in these parts, or you'd know the Count Sebastian thinks no more of a peasant's life than of a dog's. Little enough he'd care if your skull had been smashed with the balloon, he or the prince either."

As he said the last word the lackey hurried after his comrade.

The aeronaut waited until they had disappeared and he heard the rolling wheels of the departing coach before he turned away his indignant eyes.

"I wouldn't mind about the count," he muttered; "the Schrodters had an evil name always. But to think of the royal prince, he that is to be our king; it's hard to keep one's loyalty to such rulers."

Then assuming a more cheerful look he went back to the tree and looked up to its lofty summit, where his companion still clung. She was so deadly pale that he exclaimed, hastily:

"I will come up and help you down this minute. It has been a hard strain upon your strength to keep up there I know. It would be hard enough for a rough man instead of a delicate lady who has been through as much as you to-day."

"What course do you intend to take?" she asked.

"I dare not venture down yet. I shall be recognized here."

"I propose to search for some cart to take us to my home. You might go in and rest at the first cottage we find."

"No. I will not come down yet. There is too much risk attending my recognition—not so much of my person as of the fact of your having a companion. You do not know as I do what a widespread investigation will be made as soon as my escape is known. I will remain where I am. I can cling here an hour longer; but once down I could never find my way back if it became necessary for me to leave this spot. This retired field, screened as it is from the road, is the safest hiding-place for me until your cart arrives. Leave me, and go in search of one. And if you can manage to do without a driver until you have secreted me under the balloon car so much the safer and better."

"Is there such danger then?" he asked, wonderingly. "You must be some personage of great importance."

"Not so much that, my kind friend, as that mine enemy sits in a high place. It would be wrong for me to try and make light of the danger to you. And there is yet time for you to withdraw," she added, in a sorrowful, pathetic tone.

"My lady, now you hurt me more cruelly than did the wanton indifference of that ruffian count. Withdraw, forsake me in your great need? No, no, madam, not if it cost me my liberty, even my life," answered he, fervently.

"May Heaven reward and bless you!" came sobbingly from out the leafy screen. "I can do nothing now, but if the time comes that I am restored to my rights you shall be richly rewarded for this magnanimous and chivalrous kindness. Go, then, delay no longer. I confess that my limbs tremble, and my strength is nearly exhausted."

"Let me bring you up a flask of wine—it is fortunately shut tight in the drawer of the car—and then I will make haste to find a conveyance to take us away. It is a most lucky circumstance that we landed in this retired spot, or long ere this we should have found a gaping crowd around us."

And, having revived her sinking strength with the wine, the generous-hearted aeronaut set out as swiftly as possible to find the desired conveyance.

Following the road nearly a mile, he came upon the grandly carved entrance gate of a magnificent avenue, which wound nearly half a mile up the rising ground to a stately mansion.

"Count Schrodter's castle," muttered he. "I shall take fine care to seek no assistance there. But in some of his humble tenantry I may surely find a compassionate heart."

It was with immense relief that after trudging another long distance he saw a cluster of cottage-roofs nestling on the southern slope of a gently rising hill.

He walked up boldly to the first and knocked.

The rosy-faced woman who came to the door looked at him suspiciously, which made him for the first time aware of his disordered appearance, his scratched face and torn clothing.

He had not meant to refer to the balloon, but in the momentary confusion, induced by her distrustful look, he stammered:

"I have met with an accident. My balloon collapsed and fell, and I have escaped mercifully with my life. Can you tell me if I can find a horse and cart of any sort to take me home? Do any of the good men about here take little jobs of the kind?"

Her face cleared promptly as she replied: "My lad is away up at the castle, but there's Jock over beyond. His beast is at home, and he's an idle fellow as likes to earn his florins without hard work. I've a mind that he'll take you."

Jock was found—a rollicking young fellow, who was prompt in his consent, principally, the aeronaut suspected, from his desire of such close proximity to the balloon.

It was with keen satisfaction that the bargainer discovered that Jock's cart had a canvas covering. He saw the rather sorry-looking animal secured to the cart, and mounted into the seat readily.

"But," said Jock, "it be a long stretch. I shall be hungry before I come back. Wait for me to eat my dinner and supper in one. I'm powerful hungry, master."

A bright idea came to the other. "Exactly. Take as much time as you please, Jock. We must come back on this road. I will go and fetch my balloon, and stop for you on my way back."

Before Jock could gather his slow thoughts together his cart was driven off, and he was left standing with one fat hand in his pocket, staring after it; the clinking silver coin in the pocket, which had just found its way thither, reconciled him, however, and dispersed his momentary doubts.

"You is an honest man, or he would not have paid me in the beginning. He will come back with my cart, and I must hurry with the supper," he muttered, and went shambling into his cottage.

Yet it must be confessed that it was with intense relief to lingering misgivings that he heard the well-known rumble of the cart nearly an hour afterward.

He hurried down to it, staring rather dubiously at the light car at the back, which was turned bottom upward, with the limp and torn silk thrown over it, raised unnecessarily high, he thought.

"That a balloon! It looks like no balloon I ever see!" he declared as he clambered to the seat.

"I should think not. Didn't I tell you it was torn and that all the gas had escaped? It must be whole and well inflated to look like a balloon. Poor thing! it has had a hard enough time," the aeronaut answered, cheerily. "Now then, Jock, I want your horse to do his best. It will be dark before we reach the town at the soonest, and my little fraulein will be alarmed."

The journey was long and tedious in the rough vehicle, but it was safely concluded, and the cunning aeronaut gave Jock another coin, and sent him to a cake shop while he was taking out the remnants of his ruined pet at the neat doorway, wherein stood the bright-faced wife, wondering at her Carl's slow movements.

The bright eyes widened and deepened as he hastily heeled out a slender figure in black and hurried it into the doorway, from which she stood aside, mechanically, to give them room.

(To be continued.)

LORD DANE'S ERROR.

CHAPTER XLIX.

BARON CHANDOS and Talbot Dane walked the ten miles from the station after three o'clock on the morning succeeding the events just narrated. Dane fortunately knew the way or else perhaps in the darkness and storm they might have lost themselves.

They reached the little town at the foot of the mountain soon after daybreak, and, as it chanced, the first people they encountered were Cheeny and Clever Dick, creeping through the streets with a hang-dog look generally and a furtive watchfulness in their eyes that was enough of itself to attract attention to them. They had been into a shop and got them each a hat, but they were wet and dripping still from the storm in which they had been the whole night.

The two villains were in a terrible state of rage, dismay and desperation over the escape of Perdita. The suspicion that she might have returned to the house where she so mysteriously disappeared from them had not crossed their minds. All night they had been ranging the mountain side or watching the village streets.

Baron Chandos knew Cheeny before he had come near him, but Cheeny did not at once recognize the baron or his master, perhaps owing to the simple precaution of those gentlemen, which consisted in turning up the broad collars of their travelling cloaks and slouching over their faces their soft, wide-rimmed hats.

It was Dane who said, with a threatening gleam in his gray eyes, as they approached:

"We must collar them both, baron. They are rather small men, and we are both above medium size, certainly. I'll take Cheeny if you think you can manage the other."

"All right," assented the baron, in a low voice. They advanced slowly, with the dragging, heavy steps of extreme weariness, looking neither to the right nor left till nearly up with Cheeny and Clever Dick, when they parted each way, and each struck out for his man.

Cheeny was taken completely at a disadvantage, his deceived master's hand clinching on his collar like a grasp of iron, while by some logerdmain his legs were knocked from under him at the same moment.

The baron was not so fortunate. Clever Dick was not so easily surprised. He had knoeked about the world and had been too much in the habit of dodging for his personal safety for that. At the first movement of the baron towards him he shot under his hand, and crossing the road in two bounds, leaped into a large field and made off.

"Let him go!" shouted Dane; "this one will do for us. Come and help me keep from killing him."

He looked indeed as though it was a hard matter, and Cheeny was shaking like a leaf, and making no resistance whatever.

"We must take him to a magistrate the first thing," said the baron, coming back from his fruitless pursuit of Clever Dick. "I think any magistrate, upon hearing our case, would assume the responsibility of keeping him in custody till the matter can be investigated."

Talbot Dane threw up his head angrily as he was stooping over his prisoner.

"Do you think we can afford to wait for their slow law doings? I intend to investigate for myself. Here, you scoundrel, where is Miss Lorne?"

He administered a savage kick by way of emphasis as he put the question.

"I—I don't know, my lord, indeed," stammered Cheeny. "If you'll let me up I'll do my best to help you find her."

Baron Chandos bent towards him now with a darkening face.

To him the words sounded ominous.

"I shouldn't wonder if he has murdered her," he said. "You are right, Dane, we had better investigate for ourselves."

The two gentlemen dragged Cheeny upon his feet between them.

He made no objection to going back to Rylands with them, not having a suspicion that Perdita was there. He was indeed only too glad to promise anything if they would keep away from the magistrate Baron Chandos had talked of.

"I wish I could find Ball," said the baron, hesitating; "I don't fancy walking if we can ride."

Ball was the man who had telegraphed to the baron the very news which had brought him here. As it chanced he was at that moment starting to meet them at the station. He had not posted himself properly concerning the hour of the night train arriving, hence was so much behind time.

However the baron was too glad to encounter him with his roomy vehicle now. He stopped him, and they all got in, Cheeny closely watched lest he should give them the slip.

Dane indeed would not take his hand from his collar, but kept it there even after they entered the vehicle.

"Why were you so late starting to meet us?" demanded the baron now of the man Ball.

Ball explained, looking ashamed of himself, and Baron Chandos sternly told him what he thought of such carelessness.

"It may have cost a life," he significantly added; "and, whether it has or not, it has cost you a good place. You may consider yourself discharged from my service at the determination of your present month. I won't have people in my employ whom I cannot implicitly depend upon."

Ball looked scared. He made no answer, however.

The party proceeded up the mountain to Rylands. Perdita was roused from her slumbers by the sound of their furious knocking at the gate.

The room in which she was had windows towards the entrance.

The young girl's first thought was that it must be her enemies, Cheeny and Clever Dick, who were knocking.

She stole a look from the window to see, and, instead of those two worthies, beheld the worse of the two—Cheeny.

At first she did not look beyond him. At first she did not even see that he was surrounded by others. She beheld only his hated face—that face which to her recalled always the remembrance of the beautiful dead woman whom he had so fiendishly murdered.

A chill shudder ran through her, not of terror but

of repulsion. Then a grim sort of smile crossed her set lips, and her brave, bright eyes glittered.

"Let him get in if he can," she muttered to herself. "He will guess that I am here by the gate being bolted, but he won't get in very soon, I imagine, unless—"

She leaned forward a little more and tried to see the stone steps below, on which she had left the still form of Mrs. Griff the night before.

From her position she could not quite see the steps, but she saw a long skinny arm and hand, which extended beyond them and looked so gray, so altogether corpse-like that Perdita shuddered again as she drew back.

A shout from the gate drew her attention that way. Some one had seen her face as she pressed forward to look for the form of her unconscious tormentor.

"She is shut in there now; thank Heaven she is alive!" Baron Chandos was saying.

Perdita drew back still farther, stamping her foot slightly in impatience at herself.

"How could I let them see me?" she exclaimed, noting now with dismay that a number of persons stood beyond the tall, close bars of the gateway.

The fact that the hated Cheeny stood foremost prevented her from suspecting that the rest were friends.

Cheeny's amazement at the sight of Perdita there amounted to stupefaction.

As for Talbot Dane, if ever retribution overtook a sinner it was coming to him now. He had obtained but the most transient glimpse of the little face at the window, but that was sufficient to send a suspicion flashing through him that seemed to set his brain on fire.

His hand was on Cheeny's coat-collar still. He twisted it suddenly till the villain grew purple in the face.

"Perdita Lorne and Miss Channing are one person?" he asked, through his clenched teeth.

Choking as he was, Cheeny tried to writhe away from the blaze in his master's eyes.

His looks told the tale. Dane saw that he had guessed right. The woman he had hunted down so mercilessly for fear she should take his title and possessions from him was the woman he had loved so madly ever since he first saw her bright, electric face at Falkner.

And Cheeny had known it all the while.

He stood looking at him without relaxing his grip, great drops of perspiration breaking out upon his forehead.

The others stared at him, turning cold at the deadly look on his face.

Baron Chandos spoke at last, laying his hand gently on Dane's shoulder.

"Let go of him, Talbot. Don't make matters worse than they are by murdering him and cheating the gallows."

Dane slowly relaxed his hold.

"I ought to kill him," he said, hoarsely, with a wild glance at the window where Perdita's face had been.

It was gone now. The young girl had retreated precipitately on finding that she was seen, and had returned to Georgie.

"I may as well wake and dress him," she thought, "while I can. Heaven knows where he and I will lie down to sleep next."

There were heavy bolts on the door of this room. She had drawn them the night before, and she glanced toward them now thoughtfully as she gently roused the child, and taking his clothes from where she had hung them to dry the night before proceeded to dress him.

The little boy behaved well as usual. He was broad awake in a moment, and having given his tender protectress a good-morning hug announced that Georgie was hungry, a fact elicited, no doubt, by the sight of the basket from which he had supped the previous night.

"When Georgie is dressed he shall have some," answered Perdita, thoughtfully.

She was listening all the time for the sounds of her enemies' approach, and wondering if it would be possible to outwit them again.

"If I had a rope I could climb out of the window while they are hammering at this door," she thought, regretfully. "Hark! what was that?" she cried as a shock came that resounded through the house like a clap of thunder. "They have got through the gate and are trying to break open the door."

It was true.

Readily conjecturing that Perdita had taken them all for enemies, Baron Chandos had made no more effort to attract her attention, but driving close to the wall had himself climbed from the vehicle over the high gate and unbolted it for the others.

Talbot Dane did not speak as he passed into the courtyard, but his grip of Cheeny's coat-collar never relaxed.

At the stone steps the party made a horrified stop. Mrs. Griff lay just as Perdita had left her. She was dead indeed.

The gray hair and gray face, the wide-open, strong eyes looked grayer and stonier than ever through the rain that had washed them all night.

Baron Chandos turned a stern and horrified glance upon the villain Cheeny.

"This woman was in charge down here, baron. She has been here a long time," said Talbot Dane. "I suspect this master villain can tell us how she comes in this plight. Did you have to kill her, Cheeny, to get your own way here?"

Cheeny's teeth were chattering between cold and terror. His eyes glared sullenly on the dead woman's face.

"She fell and broke her own head on the stones," he muttered. "Don't you see the bruise?"

There was indeed a livid mark over the left temple.

The baron had meanwhile advanced to the great strong entrance door, and, having tried and found it locked, came back to Cheeny, satisfied that he could open it if he would.

"I'll make a battering ram of your head if you don't," he said, threateningly, his eyes glaring like coals, and his brows bent ominously.

Cheeny fairly gasped for breath, and shrank near even to his outraged master to avoid the furious baron.

"I can't open it. I don't know how she—Miss—my la—the young lady came here, I'll swear I don't. My lord baron, if you look you will see that the key is on the inside."

The baron examined the keyhole.

"It is true," he muttered, very much puzzled; "the key is on the inside. It's locked from the inside. Who is in there beside the young lady, you villain?"

"Nobody but—but—Grizzle," stammered Cheeny, turning green with forebodings at his own words.

Talbot Dane turned upon him in a horrible passion.

"You don't mean to say that idiot giant is locked up in there with her?"

Cheeny's awful face was answer enough to the query.

The young man did not look at him but once. Then, hurling him from him with a force that felled him flat and senseless upon the stones, Dane dashed at the door as if he would break it in a thousand pieces.

But he might as well have essayed to break a wall of adamant.

"I shall go mad, baron, if we can't get inside," he cried. "Good Heaven! you don't know the creature. He's as strong as a tiger and has only the instincts of one, I do believe."

The baron had taken his stand quickly near the prostrate form of Cheeny. He told the man Ball to watch him while he spoke to Dane.

"You forget that we saw her at the window. She is unharmed as yet, I am sure."

He glanced as he spoke upward again, just in time to have a glimpse of Perdita once more.

He called out loudly to her.

There was no answer, and the little face vanished instantly.

Baron Chandos stamped impatiently.

"How shall we get in?" he fumed.

Meanwhile Perdita stood with her hands pressed to her eyes, and trembling with excitement. She had seen Baron Chandos and Ball, and Cheeny lying as if felled by a blow.

What could it mean? Had help come to her at last?

Talbot Dane, standing nearer the doorway, had not been recognized by her.

Only for an instant Perdita stood thus, then, thoughtful, even in that moment, of the child she had protected so long, she snatched him from the floor and ran down to the entrance door. The key was in the lock. It was the work of a moment only to turn it, and two more to undo the bolts. She did both, and threw open the door, daringly facing whatever might be beyond it.

The first person she saw was the last one she was looking for just then.

Talbot Dane, as he heard the bolts undoing, and the key turned, had pressed forward involuntarily.

Baron Chandos remained a little behind him.

Both faces were passionate with eagerness. But Perdita's outflashed Dane's as she beheld and recognized the man she had last seen on a bed of sickness from which he might never have risen but for her—the man who had made love to her at Falkner as Miss Channing, who had written her love-letters in London, as she believed, and finally sent her a false message to come to him on his death-bed here at Rylands—the man who had conspired with a murderer to destroy her lest she should take from him his title and possessions.

One moment and her heart stood still, and her little brave face blanched and drooped as if she were

going to faint, for Talbot Dane was also the man she had loved till Cheeny had exposed him to her.

The next she was herself again, her small head proudly uplifted, her dark, bright eyes, matchless in their scorn and anger, darting past him to the others.

Had he come himself to perfect his wicked schemes, and were these others his accomplices?

Baron Chandos stepped forward as Dane, reading the lightning glance in Perdita's eyes aright, shrank back, ghastly with agitation, shame and humiliation.

"We have come to rescue you from the villain Cheeny. We are friends," explained the baron, seeing the angry doubt in the girl's spirited face.

"Are we in time? He has not succeeded in forcing you to marry him?"

The villain upon the stones had come to himself. He heard the question and lifted his head like a bruised snake.

"You're too late," he called. "She's my wife in any case."

(To be continued.)

WARNED BY THE PLANETS.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE young man closed and locked the door, and removing the key slipped it in his vest pocket; then he advanced towards her with outstretched hand.

"Well," he said, with his ugly, sneering smile, "are you ready to bid me good-morning?"

Maggie did not utter a word in response; she only met and held him back with her bright, fearless eyes.

"You see," he went on, "you're in my power at last, my little beauty. I told you how it would be. You wouldn't agree to peaceable terms. What do you say now?"

She did not answer; but her clear eyes never wavered in their steadfast gaze.

In spite of all his dogged determination and daring the young nobleman grew uneasy, his own eyes fell, and he half turned away.

"What do you stand and stare for?" he cried, angrily. "I'm not here to harm you. I love you. Don't you understand that? I, who might have my pick of the finest women in London, want no one but you. I was bound to have you too. I've got you now. Sit down and let's talk about it."

He helped himself to a chair and pushed one forward to Maggie, but she did not notice it, she only followed him with her steady, scornful eyes.

"Confound her!" he muttered, under his breath; "I believe she's gone mad, sure enough. Here, stop that!" he cried, bounding from his seat and making a grasp at her arm.

Maggie recoiled from his touch with a flashing blaze in her eyes.

"Don't put your hand on me!" she panted, "I command you, Lord Strathpey!"

He laughed a coarse, brutal laugh.

"What if I do?" he questioned, tauntingly. "You are mine now. How can you help yourself? But," he added, a look of something like real admiration lighting his face, "I won't vex you, I want to be good to you if you let me. When you are my wife I mean you shall have the costliest jewels and the grandest turn-out procurable. You never thought of it, Maggie; 'tis no common thing to be an earl's wife."

"You will never be an earl," she replied, quietly, but with ineffable scorn in her silvery voice.

He half rose from his seat, an awful look leaping to his eyes, but choking down his passion he resumed his seat and went on:

"Never mind; we'll see about that. I want you for my wife before I get the earldom. There's a rectory just below here within Scottish boundary; we'll drive over there and get the ceremony performed, and by to-night you shall be back at Ravenswood with your father. Will you do it?"

"No, sir!"

"Now, see here. You can't help yourself. You are wholly at my mercy. I've told the people here—with a brutal laugh—"that you are crazy, an escaped lunatic, and if you batter the windows down they'll only think you crazier, don't you see? You can't escape. Come now, let's go and get married peacefully and be good friends all the rest of our days."

He arose and made an attempt to take her hand, but she repelled him with a gesture.

"Lord Strathpey," she said, her young voice ringing like a trumpet, "I shall never be your wife. You may drag me to the altar, but I'll denounce and defy you there as I do here."

He watched her a moment, the old, dangerous look coming back to his eyes.

"Very well," he replied then, in the quiet tone he always used when he was much moved, "have it your own way. You'll see whether you'll hold out or not when I get you in the quarters I've prepared for you. We'll see."

He turned and strode from the room, his face white with anger, and locked the door after him.

Maggie sat by the window gazing down into the dingy yard below, and pondering on what Lord Strathpey had said.

The people at the inn regarded her as an escaped lunatic. That explained at once the peculiar conduct of the landlady. The young nobleman had spoken advisedly when he said she was utterly in his power. She was, and without one single hope of escape.

Thinking it all over, Maggie's brave heart failed her, and dropping her bright head forward on the window-sill she sobbed, in her despair, like a child.

But her grief was more for her old father's sake than for her own.

The long, dreary summer day went slowly by, and it seemed an eternity to poor Maggie, pacing up and down her bare prison in frantic impatience. But at last it came to an end. The sun went down behind the Scottish hills, the purple twilight fell, and the great white stars came flashing out in the opal sky like unset diamonds.

Once again her prison door was opened, and the young lord entered.

"Come," he said, quietly, unfolding a parcel containing a shawl and a hat, "get these on; we are going now."

Maggie paid no heed to his command.

"Will you go quietly?" he continued. "I wish you would, but if you like to be stubborn there's nothing to hinder. You see this," he added, producing a small, transparent vial, and holding it before her eyes; "one single sniff at it will make you as gentle as a lamb, and there are plenty to help me to carry you down. Take your choice at once. Will you go quietly or not?"

She arose without a word, and put on the shawl and hat. There was nothing to be gained by resisting with that deadly drug before her eyes.

The young man took her hand and drew it through his arm. They descended to the public parlour of the "Lion and the Unicorn."

The landlord and his wife and one or two guests were present, and the whole of them arose at once, and stood ready to decamp in case of any violent manifestations.

Maggie had thought to appeal to them for help, but seeing their winks and nods and significant glances she refrained. They believed her to be mad, and would not give ear to anything she said.

She suffered Lord Strathpey to lead her out to the tavern porch. There was a closed carriage in waiting a few yards from the steps, and half a dozen boys and men loitered around, looking on with curious insolence.

The poor girl's cheeks tingled with outraged pride and anger, and she went to the carriage door in utter silence.

In the very instant that her foot touched the step, and the young lord was hurrying her in, the horses shied and plunged forward, throwing her back with some violence.

"Take care, madam," cried a young man, who had just come up from another direction. "Allow me to help you."

He caught her before she fell and drew her back a step or two while the horses were being restrained.

Maggie turned the moment she recovered from the shock, and looked at him, and in the summer dusk she saw something in his handsome, blonde face that inspired her with confidence.

Swifter than thought—for Lord Strathpey was approaching rapidly, while the stable-boy held the horses—she grasped his arm, with both her slender hands and raised her lovely eyes to his face.

"Oh, sir, for Heaven's sake help me," she implored; "that man is the Earl of Strathpey's son, and he is forcing me from home and friends—save me—help me!"

The young lord rushed up with a bitter oath.

"She's a lunatic—don't heed her," he cried, hotly, too hotly it struck the calm young stranger. "Come on—come, I say."

He drew her to the carriage door, and lifted her in by main force, springing after her with astonishing rapidity.

Maggie struggled from his grasp and succeeded in reaching the window.

"Oh, sir, save me, save me!" she cried, in imploring accents.

"Who is she?" demanded the young man of the landlord as the carriage whirled away.

"A mad woman, as he told ye; she escaped, and he's taking her back—she's a purty young thing."

The stranger sauntered off in the deepening twilight.

"I don't believe it," he murmured, his blue eyes brooding and serious; "there was no madness in her face! Heavens, what a face it was! Like one of Raphael's Madonnas. I've half a mind to follow her and unravel this mystery. By Jove, I will."

And he shot off through the purple gloom with the speed of an antelope.

(To be continued.)

THE LILY OF CONNAUGHT.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Those who inflict must suffer, for they see—
The work of their own hearts, and that must be
Our chastisement or recompense. Shelley.

"Why stands that woman under guard?" asked the Lord Brehon as his eyes fell upon the weird personage.

"My lord, she is accused of sorcery and witchcraft with sacrilege, and other mis—"
"That is matter for the investigation of my lord bishop."

"Woman," said the king, "how answerest thou this charge of witchcraft?"

"They are idiots who talk of witchcraft. My knowledge was my witchcraft—knowledge gained whilst they, priest and prince, snored the sleep of ignorance—knowledge sought through years to give me power to injure thee and thine."

"What, woman, durst thou beard us with thy threats? Now I recollect thy evil face. Why hast thou haunted me with threats of vengeance and dealt in idle prophecies 'gainst me and mine? What fiend or what wrong provoked thee to this?"

"The fiend of revenge," she cried, with a fierce laugh, whilst her eyes glittered like those of a snake—"the wrong of thirty years!"

"Woman, it is impossible I ever could have wronged thee!"

"Oh, yes, yes, yes!" she cried. "Thou art right to shut thy memory, to wipe the record from thy tablets. It is the privilege of royalty to do wrong and to forget. It is the office of humanity to suffer and be dumb. But let me wake thy memory, king. Thirty years ago, in thy young day of power, occurred the wrong I suffer. It was the same wrong that even now makes thy executioner's axe drink Rory Ruadh's blood—the slaughter of a son."

"Thy son?"

"Ay, my son, done to death by thee on baseless charge of treason as thou hadst nearly done upon banished knight. For that I dedicated myself a priestess of revenge—for that I roamed thy woods without a shelter, until I found the entrance to the convent vaults—for that did I desecrate the holy veil that I might have a harbour near thee, a chance to study magic—to strive to gain the power that knowledge gives—to dream upon revenge."

"What though thou thoughtst that I did wrong thee what had my daughter done that thou shouldst fix thy baleful eyes on her? Why, hast thou given her thy diabolical philtres to force her heart to an unworthy love?"

The woman laughed loud and long, and her eyes glittered with wild triumph as she answered:

"Why? Because I knew she was dearer to thy heart than all else on earth. Because thy whole race came within the scope of my revenge. Philtrous! Ha! Ha! Royal idiot! 'Twas nature placed her love, not I. The philtre was the life of her young heart looking for answering life—the charm was the very worthiness of him thy petty selfishness declares unworthy."

"Woman, speaking thus, why didst entice her to thy horrid den?"

"To have her in my power—to wring thy heart."

"Why rescue her and bring her back?"

"To give thee two-fold torture by crushing her heart and thine by thine own act—and thou hast done it, king. I see it on thy anguished face. Thy stubborn heart is breaking—not as mine did by a single snap, but breaking, breaking, breaking!"

"Hence, horrible fiend! Drag this torturer hence!" cried the king, his voice breaking, and the tears springing to his eyes as his affection triumphed o'er his pride. "Away with her—away to the doom she merits!"

A file of the bishop's attendants left his side, and, gliding under the hall, silently surrounded the woman like spectres.

"Ay, take me!" she cried, triumphantly, waving her hands above her head. "'Tis time that I should rest. My mission is accomplished. My prophecies—idle forebodings!—are now in quick fulfilment. The Saxon war-drums thunder in the east, their spears are glittering in the Shannon waves, and who is there to meet them when the O'Connor's heart is crushed beneath my heel? My boy, my boy! thou art most terribly avenged. I thank thee, Heaven! Now let me die!"

Her ghostly guardmen swept her noiselessly from the hall, and a wave of the royal sceptre dismissed the assembly.

"Oh, Desmond, Desmond!" cried the king, falling upon his son's neck. "I am sick at heart—woe of my royalty and pomp—of pride, unfeeling, empty pride."

The surprised remark that Desmond was about

to make on this unusual display of weakness by his storn parent was interrupted by angry shouts, the clash of arms and the loud pealing of the battle-cries of Red Roderick's clansmen.

They had discovered the death of their leader, and were fired with rage to avenge his fall.

But Desmond had foreseen the effect of their discovery, and all was prepared. He rushed from the hall, and, at one blast of his bugle-horn, the royal troops swept around the little band, enclosing them in a solid wall of steel.

The conflict was of brief duration. Some few were slain, the rest disarmed and dismissed towards their homes, and the great pageant of war swept onward as if nothing had occurred.

Now mass upon mass of gathering clansmen hurried in to join the banners of the king, and mass upon mass of marshalled warriors hurried away to face the foe.

Every hour saw dust-covered couriers spurring to the castle gate, to be met there by others departing with fateful orders.

But all the bustle of preparation and the excitement of the coming conflict, in which his life and crown were the weighty stake, could not draw the mind of the king from the contemplation of his private sorrow.

The words of the revengful Breda were ranking in his heart.

In the shadows of the gloomy corridors as he went to his apartment he thought he saw again the tearful, pleading face of his child, and its long, despairing, farewell look to her banished lover.

"It was a look that pictured a desolated heart," he said. "My child, my poor, poor child! Oh, Heaven! Oh, Heaven! why am I tortured thus? Why hast thou planted love and pride in the same heart? Why not in all alike?"

He paused, for he was passing the rooms of the princess, and the door in the corridor was slightly ajar, showing the feeble radiance of the already lighted candles in the ante-chamber.

Involuntarily he put his hand upon the oak-panel and pushed it more widely open. The door of the inner room was closed and all was silent.

"Better to see her," he said, "to stop between her and her grief, to save her from herself. I will reason with her. I will convince her what sheer madness it is to love beneath her station. She will list to reason."

He advanced slowly a step or two with the intention of rapping at the inner door, but he was stopped by a sobbing wail proceeding from within that cut into his heart like a knife.

"Alas! alas!" he cried, "no cold sophistry of reason can reach the heart whence that cry proceeds."

He turned and fled precipitately to his chamber, and casting himself into a chair he buried his forehead in his hands and groaned aloud in the depth of his anguish.

The gray shadows of evening were deepening, to the blackness of night when he was awakened from his wild abstraction by an unusual sound, in the court-yard.

He felt no interest in what it was, but he arose like an automaton, without the least exertion of will, and went toward the window.

By the light of a bonfire burning upon the granite pavement, and of a few spluttering torches in the hands of attendants, he saw that the chiefs and leaders were crowded in the court, while in the centre near the fire was a group upon which all eyes were fixed.

This group was composed of Lord Edward Bruce, Prince Desmond, Prince Brazil, and another whom he did not recognize, for his back was toward him.

The next moment two horses were led forth by an esquire. Their proud, trained pace showed that they were war steeds, yet they bore none of the trappings of war.

Instead of the spiked frontlet and the embossed housings they had but the plain leathern head-stall and hunting-saddle, with dark, unornamented under-cloth.

As the steeds were led up to the group the unknown personage turned, and the king, to his surprise, saw the banished man, Sir Connacht Moran.

The young warrior had thrown aside all knightly habillment, all ornament of rank, and was plainly attired in a linen hunting-dress of saffron hue, his legs were cased in tight-fitting bracers of the tartan of his clan, a barret, or cap of blue linen, with tassels of red; a tasselled hunting-horn lay upon his right hip, his weighty sword swung at his left, and an Irish bow and a quiver full of arrows hung at his back and completed his array.

The heart of the king smote him as he saw the chivalrous youth going forth thus naked and friendless to the world.

And at the moment he felt like calling from the casement to countermand his sentence, but he saw the warm farewell of Bruce and the stately leaving of the stern soldier, Desmond.

He saw Brazil and Moran fold each other in a brotherly embrace, and he heard the valedictory

cheer from the assembled chiefs as the exile, with a light touch vaulted into his saddle and caught his hunting-spear from the hand of his esquire, and his heart was steeled again by pride.

"By my soul," he said, "he has stolen their hearts as well as hers! It is a farewell befitting a king."

At that moment, as Moran waved his hand in farewell to the towers of Castle Connor, the group of warriors separated to give passage to a female figure, whom the king instantly recognized as the princess's maid, Theresa.

The girl approached and handed a green wilken scarf and a tiny note to the departing knight, who bent from his saddle to hear her accompanying words.

Then with a sudden start and the light of joy shining in his eyes he pressed the tokens to his lips, waved his cap toward the battlements, and dashed away over the drawbridge, followed by his faithful esquire.

The king turned away with a sigh, and said, sorrowfully:

"He is happier, far happier than I, his banisher, can ever hope to be."

For a long, long time he sat tortured by the rapid flow of painful thoughts.

The attendants had brought and placed the lights unnoticed, the evening repast had been announced unheeded, when suddenly he called for the page, Ronald.

"My liege," said the boy, approaching.

"Call the Prince Brazil, hither."

The boy was departing when he called after him.

"Brazil, not Desmond, mind you."

He feared to submit his new-born purpose to the stern opinion of his elder son.

"Brazil," he said as, a few minutes afterward, the prince entered the room, "I know thy love for Connacht Moran. Dost thou not think that I have wronged him?"

"Father, his sentence is severe, inasmuch that he hath done no crime to merit it."

"Think'st thou so? Canst thou pursue him so fleetly as to bring him back?"

"Oh, father!" exclaimed the astonished prince, "Give but the word, the wind shall not outstrip me!"

"God! Heaven speed thee!"

The impulsive prince was already gone, taking the staircase at dangerous bounds, and like an answer to his own words the king heard his voice in the court-yard, shouting:

"My horse! Ho, horse! To horse, all ye that wish for rich reward! Get forth and overtake Sir Connacht Moran!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

True as the needle to the pole,
Or as the dial to the sun: Boala.

DURING the time that the king sat in doubt and anxiety in his chamber the Princess Kate was stealthily unlocked, and a dark, muffled female figure pushed aside the hanging vines of the bawn and stepped through.

After a very short listening pause she stooped and pulling forth the skiff, which had been returned to its hiding-place, she seated herself therein; and struck away across the dark waters to where the grove approached the edge of the moat.

No sooner had the bow of the boat touched the bank than a low, hoarse voice whispered from the coppice:

"Is that you, my lady?"

"Hush, forester, yes," she answered.

"Did you come alone, my princess?" said Black Murtaugh, approaching to assist her to land.

"Yes," she answered; "I left Theresa, lest my father should send for me or visit my apartment before I can return. She will say I have retired."

"Haste, then! Heaven bless us," said the forester, leading her by the hand into the grove. "Oh, but the gallant knight will joy to see thee, although his heart will bleed at this farewell!"

The princess sobbed audibly.

"Alas, my princess," continued the forester, in his guttural whisper. "Alas! that the day should beam on the night shroud gloom in which O'Connor's Child should have to steal in disguise to stab a loyal heart with words of parting."

"Peace, peace!" whispered the princess, sobbingly.

The man was silent, and they hastened on deeper and deeper into the wood. Soon the growling of dogs was heard, and the rattle of chains, as they strove to free themselves at the sound of their master's footsteps.

"Fear not, my lady," whispered the man. "We are near my shieling. It is but the dogs, Wolf-fang and Sango, that had well nigh done such harm. But they are chained. Thank Heaven, my soul is free from that, my princess; had they killed him, I should have killed myself. I would not dare to live with that burden on my soul."

The princess shuddered, but was reassured by the glimmer of lights through the trees. It proceeded

from a small, deep-set window in the stone wall of the forester's lodge.

A bothy, or shed, with a roof formed of interlaced osiers was at one end of the house, and beneath this two horses were stamping their iron hoofs into the soft turf.

The breath of Eva O'Connor came short and quick as she heard the sound, and her heart thrilled as she caught sight of a graceful, stately figure passing between her and the lighted window.

"Sir Knight, Sir Knight!" whispered the forester.

There was a smothered exclamation, and the next moment Eva O'Connor was clasped in the passionate embrace of Desmond Moran, and Black Murtaugh disappeared, leaving the lovers together beneath the starry skies.

"My Eva! my beloved!" cried Moran, rapturously, as he strained her to his bosom.

"Oh, Moran, this is too, too bitter!" she sobbed.

"Nay, by Heaven, Eva, my own, my faithful, 'tis the happiest, sweetest moment of my life. Despair, this earnest of the priceless love is rich reward for all danger, all doubt, all frowns that fortune hath in store. The memory of this meeting shall steel my heart to the rude buffets of the world—the light of thy love shall make the barrenness of foreign lands as bright and lovable as are these fairy comes I leave behind! The glorious thought that for thy love I suffer shall make me strong to bear—a thought dearer to me than crowns or titled rank, more precious than the blood that warms my heart, more loved than life or future hope."

"Oh, Moran, Moran!" she sobbed as his lips touched her wet cheek. "Why are we doomed to suffer thus? Why did I not in my delirium? Then I had never known this crushing woe."

"Oh, cruel, cruel," he said. "Then had I never wished to live. Gibbet or hang had then been welcome to me. If thou hadst died, I think thou that memory had given me rest to live. No, by my word, my eager blade had cleaved my heart in twain, and I had joined thee, love, beyond the stars."

"Speak not of memory," she cried; "what must my tortures be when thou art gone? When every scene endeared by vanished joys shall strike my aching gaze—when the mossy sod that proudly sprang to meet thy tread shall feel like ice beneath my leaden feet—when the sunlight, which, when viewed with thee, was but the ray, light of hope and love, shall seem the livid threatening of the storm—when the tuneful breeze, that erst, enamoured of thy hush and voice, caught up the sounds and bore them lovingly away, shall sound like hollow moans of broken hearts—what joy shall dwell with me?"

"And I, my Eva?"

"Thou wilt gain forgetfulness from unknown scenes. Fresh offering joys, and new attractions will dim remembrance of the griefs gone by. But to me no leaf, no tree, no flower, no song of bird, no dallying summer breeze, sporting with silver clouds, no thing of beauty but shall speak of thee. Oh, believe me, Moran, parting is worse than death."

"Why, then, Eva—why should we part?" cried the young man, in a voice whose ring, fervour thrilled her heart. "Fly with me, my dearest! Let us forsake these sorrow-hinting scenes, and haste to where the light of freedom shines, where are no kings—no cruel, foolish barriers, twist hearts which Heaven has taught to beat as one. Come, my beloved, come!"

The princess gave a cry of alarm as he clasped her waist with an eager hand, and led her toward where the impatient tramping of the horses was heard.

"Oh, Moran!" she exclaimed, in a tone of fear, "what is't you say? What think'st thou the king, my father—and my fiery brothers—would do? What would their vengeance be if such flight of mine should stain their smutcheon? Oh, think of such disgrace!"

"I defy their vengeance!" exclaimed Moran, excitedly. "Is not our love as sacred as their pride? Did not Heaven make our hearts as well as theirs? Come, come, my love—I yield the world for thee! Away with glory, away with glitter and gaud, away with ambition! I live henceforth for love and thee alone! See, I have thrown away the trappings of the busy world, I have arrayed myself in the garb of happy freedom. Come! the steeds prance with impatience to be gone, the boat is dancing on the rippling waters. Come, Eva, come! let us fly to the wilds in search of the happiness and love we never can hope for here. Fear not. Beyond the ken of men and the reach of spite shall our home be found. Cast away thy sorceries—the holy man at the Chapel of Rest at Lough Corrib shall give our love Heaven's sanction."

"Lough Corrib—it is in the wilderness!"

"The wilderness, my beloved one, shall henceforth be my dwelling-place. Let it also be thine. Far from jarring crowds—what have we to do with the men and women of the world?—far from strife and envy, and all the hollow mockeries of pride, our lives shall flow in one calm stream of love."

"Oh, Moran, Moran! tempt me not, for my own heart is turning traitor to me, and pleads for thee."

"Oh, Eva, do not call that treason which springs from truth! Check not the holy impulse of thy heart, but come. Come far from Castle Connor's clans! I will guide and guard thee. Let us fly to the Lake of Swans, where the fallow deer boudeth in freedom. There will I build thy hut, there the wood shall yield us its berries and luscious fruits, there will I bring thee the early prey of the lake and the wild fowl and the honeycomb."

His arm encircled her slender, trembling form in a passionate clasp, and he was endeavouring to guide her reluctant steps toward the stamping horses, when suddenly they heard loud cries from the direction of the castle, and the clatter of many hoofs on the paved road.

It was the sound of Brazil and the couriers following the exile with the pardon of the king.

"Oh, Moran!" cried Eva O'Connor, in affright. "Call the forester. Release me, and get thee gone! They have missed me from the castle. If they find us here together they will slay thee!"

The forester had heard the alarm and hastened forth.

"Sir Knight and princess," he said, hurriedly, "I fear me there is danger. Yea, hurry, hurry galloping sounds like pursuit went out in all directions. I pray thee hasten back, my lady. The Falcon Knight can rest here in my dwelling till this be overblown."

"No, I must be onward and away!" cried Moran, pressing the princess to his breast. "Oh, Eva, Eva, must I go alone? With him must come with me where no alarms shall vex thee more, where the only noise of man shall be the twang of my bow or the tinkle of my clasp-horn? Come, love of mine, let me not seek the wilderness alone!"

She trembled and sobbed as the passionate appealing fell upon her ear, and at last faltered:

"Take me, Moran, take me—let us fly at once. My life, as my love, is thine!"

With a cry of joy the young warrior caught her up in his arms, and rushed toward the horses.

"Quick, quick, come!" he cried to his esquire. "Make ready the steeds. We ride for life, and have a precious burden."

The astonished esquire loosened and led forth the beasts, and his master having sprung into the saddle, he knelt to assist the princess to mount.

With great trepidation she placed her small foot on his extended palm and was lifted to the arms of her lover.

Not until the esquire himself was mounted and all turned for the way did the terrified forester find his tongue.

"Oh, Sir Knight, oh, for the love of Heaven, my princess, think what it is ye do."

"We have thought, Sir Forester, 'tis too late for thinking. Farewell! Thanks and Heaven's blessings for thy many services and thy kind heart."

"Farewell, my faithful forester," said Eva, sobbing, as she extended her hand to the deeply affected man. "When I am far away and evil tongues revile me let thy one honest voice defend the O'Connor's Child."

"My life, my soul for thy defence, gentlest and purest," said the forester, with quivering voice, as he seized the fair hand and pressed it to his bearded lips.

But there was no time for farther leave-taking, for hoof-strokes, bugle-calls and loud cries came nearer and nearer, and, startled by the sounds of pursuit, the bloodhounds sprang from their kennels in the darkness, growing savagely and threatening to snap their chains in their wild endeavours to get free.

"Those dogs, those dreadful dogs," almost screamed the princess as the horses sprang forward at the spur-strokes. "Oh, do not let them loose upon our track!"

"Never, my princess, never!" exclaimed Black Murtaugh, falling on his knees with upraised hands.

But his words were drowned by the plunge of the horses as they dashed madly through the dark forest, and the rough man bent his head and sobbed aloud as he thought that the lovely mistress to whom gratitude had bound his heart had left his sight for ever.

His wife and daughter heard the sound in the cottage, and knowing that he was now alone they hastened forth to find the cause of his wailing.

"Ah, machree!" he cried as they tried to raise him. "The land is desolate, for the flower of flowers is torn from the stem. The night is black and the sun of joy will rise no more on the vales of Castle Connor. Ah, colleen; she is gone for ever, the lily-princess that dared the wave to save the peasant's child, that broke the grip of death and gave you life!"

"Who—what—the princess? In Heaven's name what mean you?" cried the astonished mother and child.

But his answer was interrupted by the near ap-

proach of some person riding at speed along the waggon-track through the forest, and as he sprang to his feet Prince Brazil, accompanied by several horsemen, burst into the light that streamed from the open cottage door, calling aloud:

"Forester! What, oh! Black Murtaugh!"

"Ah, Heaven!" groaned the poor man, in agony, "does my trial come already?"

"Ah, you are abused," cried the prince, hearing his voice. "Quickly tell us did the knight, Sir Connacht Moran, pass this way?"

"He did, my lord, and must be far away by this," answered the forester, slowly, and with bowed head.

"How long since his passage, and whither lay his road?" cried the prince, impatiently, catching his fretful steed.

The forester paused an instant, and then, sinking on one knee, he faltered:

"Pardon me, noble prince, I cannot deceive thee—I will not tell."

"What!" cried the prince, in an impatient, half-pleasant, half-angry tone. "Thy friendship doth thy friend but ill service. I seek the warrior with the full pardon of the king."

"Merciful Heaven!" ejaculated the forester, throwing himself flat upon the earth in a frantic burst of grief. "Merciful Heaven! Too late! But five minutes sooner all had been well. But now—now—"

"Eise, man! Art mad? What means this frenzy?" cried Brazil, in astonishment and anger.

"Oh, my good lord, my prince," cried the forester, clasping the other's foot in his appealing hands. "Leave this to me. Let me be bearer of this pardon. All will be well. Call in the esquires and pursuivants. Return to thy castle. I will follow him and bring him back. All will be well."

"Why, man, thou art distraught! What means all this wild yargon?" cried the bewildered prince.

"What, ho! Forester, what, ho!" came a loud voice from the wood, and the next instant Desmond O'Connor thundered up on foaming steed, followed by mounted torch-bearers.

"Hail! Over-gentle brother, thou art here," he cried, savagely. "'Tis well; thou shalt be able yet to mend thy folly!"

"What mean'st thou?"

"The honourable knight whom thou didst force the king to pardon hath well repaid thy kindness. He hath fled and carried Eva with him!"

"Impossible!"

"Is it? Return and see," cried Desmond, savagely. "You will find a king, whose name was erst a word of honour and of terror, rending his hair like a mad brook in the moonlight oage from which his bird had flown. Good-natured man, he went to comfort her with tidings of this pardon. Ho, forester! let out the dogs."

"So, traitor," cried Brazil, turning furiously on Black Murtaugh, "this was the reason of thy terror and thy jumbled words. Thy house has been their trysting-place. They have not many minutes fled from here. Thy life shall pay—"

He drew his sword to slay the offending man, but Desmond interposed.

"Hold, brother," he cried. "This fellow knows the way they fled. Why kill the guide that can lead us to our vengeance? Let him die after. Haste, rascal; loosen those dogs that lick their chops for blood. They tasted his before; they shall this time drink their fill!"

The forester did not move, and his wife and daughter clung to him, wailing.

"Haste, traitor, and loosen them!" yelled Brazil.

"Never, my prince!" answered the man, with compressed lips.

The infuriated prince sprang from his saddle and rushed towards him, but the forester retreated until he stood between the two monstrous bloodhounds, one of which rushed forward at either side of him, bounding on their chains ready to tear his assailant to pieces.

"Beware the brutes!" cried Desmond. "Slay him with a javelin."

"Hold, my lord," said the forester, raising his brown hand, and at his voice and action his savage protectors crouched down and came to his side with a whinny of affection. "Hold, my lords, you could not train the hounds on the scent without me. I will look on the chains."

"See it be quickly, then," cried Brazil, furiously.

Black Murtaugh knelt between the monstrous animals, who jumped and fawned upon him, licking his bearded face with their great flaming tongues.

"Wolf-fang, Sango!" he said, with a deep tremor in his voice as he returned their caresses. "We have been together as companions of the wild a long time. Many's the race I have unchained ye for, but never, my faithful ones, for such a course as now. Alas! that devotion should be so cruelly repaid."

"Cease thy mauling and let them loose," cried Desmond. "Thou dilly-dalliest but to pass the time and hinder our pursuit. Advance, soldiers; rend those chains, and let them loose!"



[REUNITED.]

One or two of the boldest of the soldiers advanced with axes, but Black Murtaugh waved them back and dropped the chain from the neck of one dog, who bounded away joyfully for a few yards, making the woods ring with his barking.

"Ho! Sango," cried the forester, and the brute returned and lay quietly down by the side of his mate, while their master stooped as if to fasten the coupling leash upon their necks.

"No leash!" cried Desmond. "Let them go free. Whoever coupled hounds at opening of a hunt?"

"I have," cried the forester. "Tis their last hunt. I have coupled them in death!"

As he spoke there was a deep guttural sound—a heaving of the two shaggy bodies, and Black Murtaugh sprang to his feet with the warm blood dripping from his long knife.

"He has killed the dogs!" was the general exclamation.

"Yes, I have killed them. Neither they nor I shall ever follow on her track. Good-bye. Heaven keep you, wife and child," he cried, in choking utterance, and, ere the sword of the exasperated prince could reach him, he buried his spear in his heart and fell without a groan beside the favourites, whom he had sacrificed to loyalty and gratitude.

With barely a glance at the two shrieking women, who rushed to the prostrate form, the princes and their companions turned away to search for the tracks of the fugitives.

The evidence of the late presence of horses in the bothy, or shed, was unmistakable, and soon the whole party were hurrying through the night upon the forest track of the exiled lovers.

CHAPTER XXV.

The hues of bliss more brightly glow
Chastis'd by sabbler tints of woe. Gray.

NOTWITHSTANDING the closeness of pursuit the darkness so favoured the flight of the lovers that when they turned upon an eminence at early dawn and looked back with anxious eyes they saw the misty bawn and towers of Castle Connor fading in the far distance, but not a sign of pursuit affrighted them.

In a mountain dell they alighted to rest, and the esquire, gathering some brush and leaves, made a fire to warm them after their chilly night ride, and, producing his scrip, or haversack, prepared a slight meal, which was added to by mountain berries gathered near their resting-place.

Then they started forward again, and continued their way westward until the red sun sank beyond the wide Atlantic and the moonless night forced them to seek shelter from the chilly dews.

The young knight knew every rock and valley, for

into this region, far from the sound of trumpets and the busy haunts of man, he and the princes Brazil and Desmond, had often penetrated in their hunting excursions.

Thus, day after day rose and fell, and they journeyed on without accident or incident, save that one morning, as they sat at their simple repast, Moran, who had been musingly silent for some time, addressed his esquire:

"Comar," he said, "methinks it ill besseemeth me in reward of all thy faithful service to let thy life be clouded by my misfortunes, or allow thy young ambition and thy hopes of glory to be swallowed up and buried in my banishment. Nay, speak not yet, for I well know thy love and friendship will cause thee to reject the thought of parting."

"Parting, Sir Connacht?"

"Yes, Comar, we must part. I think it a great wrong to let thee stay. Thy life is in its morning, the world and fame and love are all before thee. Return to them, attach thee to some master upon whom the sun of fortune shines more constantly than it has done on me."

The young man's face flushed, and his eye glistened as he replied:

"My noble master, that I have had ambitions, that gentle ties have somewhat bound me to the world, I will not seek to hide from thee, who knowest my heart so well. Yet would I think it were a recreant act for me to leave thee in thy hour of darkness who shared the flush and glory of thy fortune. If no farther cause than thought of me makes thee desire my absence let me, I pray thee, follow up my service, at least till thou art settled and secure. Even one poor friend is something to possess in this lone wilderness."

"Comar," said Moran, "Heaven is my judge how lovingly I hold thee in my heart, and that it is for thine own weal I speak. My conscience makes me press thee to return to thy path of life, to honour and success. The only thing my selfishness demands is that thou wilt bear us company as far as the chapel yonder by the lake, that thou may'st witness the solemnization of our union and herald it to the world. This, Comar, shall be the last act of duty to me."

The duty imposed upon him silenced the objections of Comar, and silently they resumed their way towards the small hamlet in which stood the little chapel.

The wives and children of the fishermen and shepherds thronged forth to gaze at and greet them, for strangers rarely invaded the quiet of their distant village.

Though the extreme beauty of the princess attracted all eyes, none had suspicion that they looked

upon their royal mistress, O'Connor's Child, for on leaving the castle she had attired herself in the plainest of Theresa's robes.

Connacht Moran was warmly welcomed by the venerable priest, who held kindly remembrance of the courteous huntsman who had often with friendly visit beguiled the tedium of his monotonous life.

The marriage ceremony was solemnly pronounced during the day before the assembled villagers, who crowded the primitive little chapel, and an improvised wedding feast, at which the whole colony were guests, was held in the little garden of the good priest's house.

Then they retired to a distant cottage, formerly a hunting-lodge, which was pointed out by the priest.

It was a simple, rude place, indeed, but its situation was retired and admirable, giving an extended view of the silver surface of the lake, specked with the little sails of the fishermen's boats.

Here Comar bade them an affectionate adieu, and started reluctantly on his return, often turning as he wound up the hills to answer their waved signals of farewell from the door of their new-found home, until at last the winding hills shut out village and lake and exiles.

The impossibility of giving an adequate description of happiness has been acknowledged, and we will not attempt the impossible by endeavouring to describe the halcyon days that now flew rapidly over the heads of the banished lovers.

Moran during the day hunted or fished, while Eva attended cheerily to the light duties of her little household, hastening joyfully to the door to answer his return song at eventide.

Then, their simple meal being over, they wandered on the sandy beach or sat on the vine-covered porch of their cot, singing the madrigals and tender songs of the olden days.

But there were now no olden days for them. They had forgotten the past. They lived but for each other in the present—to them the future had a golden veil.

Our tale is at an end. It would be a painful task to follow our other characters through a course of dark events, amidst which no glow of joy or hope shone—no gleam of light but that of desperate heroism.

The gory field of Athunree saw the total defeat of the O'Connors, and there the gallant princes laid their lifeless bodies upon the banner of their pride.

The Sister Breda died in prison.

Time, the wonder-worker, softened the sorrow of Eva for her kindred, and, returning to the home of her youth, she settled down with the choice of her heart to the enjoyment of life and love.

THE END.



[SEEKING THE SECRET.]

ELGIVA;

OR,
THE GIPSY'S CURSE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Snapt Link," "Evelyn's Plot," "Sybil's Inheritance," &c., &c."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Let the pale youth, by his dim lamp,
Himself a dying flame,
From many an antique scroll beside
Choose that which bears my name.
Let music make less terrible
The silence of the dead!

"Bertie, you here!" had been Lena's astonished exclamation as her eyes met those of the quondam admirer of her girlhood, whose services had been so frankly and freely offered, and with such true, disinterested motives, in former days.

"Yes. Are you sorry to see me, Lena? Have you seen so many grand fine folks that you forget and despise poor Bertie?" said the gipsy youth, sadly. "Ah, Lena, you promised you would trust me and use my poor service once. But you never put me to the proof, though I used to go every day to the tree, hoping to find the large 'B' carved on it; but it was never there."

"Because I could not; because it would only have put you and me too in useless danger," returned Lena, anxiously. "Bertie, Heaven has, I do believe, sent you to me this day, for I know not whom else I dare have trusted in my sore need. But how—why are you here, dear Bertie? Surely my uncle did not—"

"Oh, it is soon explained how I came here, Lena," was the youth's reply. "Your uncle knows if I give my word it will be kept, and I promised not to reveal to any human being what I saw here, and then he gave me these things to carry to you. But, oh, Lena, you are more beautiful and good than ever," he continued, half-despairingly. "You are the same and not the same as when you ran about in the woods and groves with me and Amice and Juan. You are like a lady now, Lena, though I scarcely know what is the difference."

The youth was right. Lena's air and bearing were more graceful, her beauty more refined and toned down since her contact with those more elevated, and it might be said civilized, in station and position.

Though the confinement and trials she had borne had banished the bright bloom and saddened the dancing eyes, yet there was an expression of noble devotion and self-reliance in her face that more

than compensated for the youthful brilliancy and joyousness she had lost.

"I am the same—all the same; and you are, I hope, unchanged," she replied, earnestly. "I am in deep, deep sorrow, and you can help me; you can save me from long grief and one most dear to me from a dreadful, cruel death. Bertie, will you do this—for my sake?" she pleaded, with her sweet tones and soft eyes, that might well have moved the heart of a stone, or even appeased the wrath of a jealous lover in their loving tenderness.

"Lena, Lena, you know it; you know but too well I would die rather than vex you," exclaimed Bertie, in a voice that had a mingling of tears and bitterness in its tones.

And Lena could read him aright. She could comprehend that the deep, tender love which the gipsy youth cherished for her was struggling with his better, higher nature. She could feel for the pain that she was still compelled to inflict, for higher, more terrible reasons than mere sentimental woes could affect.

"Bertie, dear Bertie, listen to me," she said, calmly. "Heaven knows that I understand and am grateful for your true, unselfish love. And I feel it for no one else, Bertie. I have no lover—none—to influence my words or actions; and yet I know that I should do wrong to let you believe I could ever feel for you as you wish. I am your true friend—your sister, if you will, grateful and true and affectionate so long as I have life; but I have higher, nobler duties to fulfil. There is human life to save, honour to shield, happiness to secure by our means. Yes, ours, dear Bertie. Will you not be my help, my support, my succour? Will you not aid me as I could hope for no other help?"

"Yet you can promise me nothing in return, Lena. Is it fair—is it just to demand so much of one whom you say you cannot ever reward with the sole boon that he desires?" answered Bertie, with some bitterness of tone. "There will doubtless be risk, difficulty, perhaps even death, in this task; yet you expect me to dare all and to receive nothing—absolutely nothing! If you are anxious for this—for Juan's safety—since he, I suppose, is the person you mean—should you not give up something for his sake, as well as I? Can you not buy his life by giving me yourself? I will love you—ay, I will spend my whole life in your service, dear Lena, if you will but speak that one word!"

It was a sore temptation for the true-hearted and loving girl.

She comprehended it all; she knew that if she did but say the word that would belie her soul then she could secure the very life—ay, and more than life, were it possible—of that honest, devoted man.

Juan's safety might hang on it, and what was there that she would not sacrifice for him?

Nothing! Nothing save sincerity and woman's truth; and if those were wanted, then she must trust to Heaven for relief in her terrible need, for vain would be the help of man.

Her look was calm as if naught but the usual trials and changes of woman's life were moving her brave spirit, and her voice did not waver as she replied, slowly and determinedly:

"No, Bertie, no. It is a task worthy of us both. If I have mistaken you, then may Heaven pardon you and help me, for I have trusted and believed in you as my second self. But I will never deceive even for his sake. Oh, may I be strong—only strong to do aright," she murmured, clasping her hands, and in vain trying to restrain the tears that forced themselves through her fingers as she clasped them before her face. "Juan, Juan, I will aid you or die with you!" she groaned, in a tone that yet fell audibly on the ears.

It was enough—ay, and more than enough. Bertie gave one gasping sigh, perhaps to the memory of the fond hopes he buried, and then he sprang forward and removed the fingers that covered the features he best loved.

"Lena, Lena, do not weep. I cannot endure it. I am as a child in your hands. Oh, do not deal harshly with me, for I am your very slave," he exclaimed, his voice quivering with the effort to subdue his emotions. "Yet do not hesitate, for the sooner I am dead the better."

"No, no. I would guard your life, dear Bertie, and till my last hour I will never cease to love and care for your happiness," she said, soothingly. "But now time presses—every minute is precious—hours are worth lives. Bertie, listen, and try to think, for my head is confused, and I can only realize that he must be saved."

In a few brief, graphic phrases she made known the terrible mystery she had discovered.

"Well?" he returned, "well?"

"Bertie, do not drive me mad by speaking in that cold, measured tone," she said, impatiently. "What can be done?"

"Have patience," he returned, calmly.

"Patience, when he is dying, losing reason perhaps even while we speak?" she exclaimed, bitterly. "Bertie, you have no feeling, no human kindness, or else you are dreaming."

The youth smiled sadly.

There seemed an age of thought and experience to have passed over him in that brief space, and his next words had a new and strange dignity in their tone.

"Lena, dear girl, try to calm yourself and remem-

ber what is really the only safety for him and all," he said. "I think I can see the horrible truth, and if I am right the only chance of his escape is in covering his rescue from that living tomb and making them believe he is still there. Now listen! If he is aware that help is at hand, and that he only needs a few hours' endurance to insure his safety, and if we can give him enough to maintain life and warmth in that time, there will be little fear of suspicion. Then I will arrange for his being secreted till we can get him out of the country to some safe hiding-place, far away from these dens in men's shape."

The girl shook her head.

"No, no, they are everywhere, they have eyes and ears and power in every land. Oh, Bertie, what can we do? He is lost!—I do fear, I feel it—ay, in spite of all your sacrifices!" she groaned. "It is perhaps cruel to drag you into a useless, fruitless danger."

"Nay, Lena. At least let me try to prove myself worthy of loving you," he said, sadly. "I care little for life, unless you could feel and say to me, 'Bertie, I thank you; you have done well and bravely.' It is not like you to lose courage, Lena, especially when all depends on your firmness."

She clasped her hands over her face, and for a few minutes she raised her very heart in prayer for help and strength.

Then she turned full and calm to her companion. "You are right, quite right, dear Bertie, and if we can but get Juan from this place in secrecy I may perhaps find some way to secure his future safety, though it will be a strange and doubtful risk. Now tell me what must be done."

"I scarcely can tell all yet, Lena, but I think we might contrive something like this. Can you not think of some medicine or other necessary you have forgotten for your patient, and I will bring it to-morrow night, when I will have strong ropes round my waist to draw up Juan from the pit. Then if you could get some women's clothes that would disguise him put together, he might go with me to some place where he can be hidden, and stay there till a ship is ready to take him across the water. I have sworn not to let you know where you are, or help you to leave this place, but I never swore as should not be saved. So long as you are here there can be little fear of discovery and no breaking of my oath. Can you endure the suspense of waiting to know he is safe?" he added, searchingly gazing at her.

"Yes, yes—anything!" she exclaimed—"anything, so that it is for him and you, Bertie."

"Then so it must be. Will you return to him or shall I go, Lena? It may cheer him to know we are trying to save him."

The girl shivered at the idea of once more daring that dreaded journey; but the feeling was repressed ere it could be perceived by her companion, and, bidding him remain during her absence, she vanished on her mission.

"She is an angel!" he thought as he paced the floor of that strange, gloomy apartment. "No wonder she cannot look on me, poor, rough, untutored gipsy as I am. Yet she does not care for Juan, at least not as a lover, while she would give her whole life for him. Is it because he is a great lord and she only one of our tribe? No, no, it is not that; there is some strange secret in it, and I—I am an idiot; for I live on the very look of her eyes, the sound of her voice, and could fall down for her to walk over my body if it did but do her pleasure—and for her sake."

Even as he murmured the words the poor invalid, whose sleep had been too profound to be roused by the low murmurs of their voices, seemed to catch the cadence.

"Yes, yes, for his sake. Long, long, weary years; but I shall see him at last, and then—oh, joy, joy! If he will take poor Tessa to his heart it will be payment for all—all then."

And Bertie, half-sorrowfully repeated her words. "Yes, yes; payment for all, Lena, dear Lena. I will bear all, do all, for your noble sake."

"Juan, Juan, do you hear? Can you take these ropes and fasten them round your body?" called Bertie as he stood at the edge of that yawning pit some twenty hours or more after that memorable night.

But no answer came.

Again and again the words were repeated, and still the terrible silence prevailed.

"Bertie, I must go to him. Tie the rope round me; I will descend and see what has happened!" said Lena, white with the terrible fear that seized her.

"It is impossible, Lena. I will go—you cannot, I will not allow it," said Bertie, firmly. "Let me run the risk if it must be done."

"No, no, that is impossible," she said. "I am not strong enough to hold the rope for you, but there can be no danger in my case. I cannot bear this dreadful suspense, and, besides, every minute is precious. Bertie, it must be."

And the brave girl fastened the rope round her waist, and gave the ends to the young man to hold for her descent.

It was a frightful moment for both. Even Lena could hardly have realized the horror of being suspended in that yawning abyss with but a slender rope between her and death.

And Bertie's very teeth chattered as he restrained the trembling of his nervous arms, and steadied his throbbing heart by the remembrance that the life of her he loved hung on his strength and firmness.

At last there was a pause.

Lena had reached the bottom of that fearful living grave, and he could hear her cry of agonized entreaty to its tenant.

"Juan, dearest Juan, speak—look. It is Lena come to save you, to take you from this place. You are with those who love you, Juan. Oh, mercy! Is he dead?" she shrieked, in uncontrollable agony.

There was a groan, a gasping sob—more precious to the terrified girl than the sweetest music. And her efforts, her prayers were renewed.

Bertie could hear the soft yet eager murmur. He could imagine the chafing of hands, the kisses on the damp, cold brow.

"Bertie, Bertie, I have secured all! Now draw him up," she called. "I will remain till he is safe. Quick, quick! There is no time for arguing," she said, impatiently. "There, there—pull, strong, firm, and he will be safe."

The young man would have refused, but he saw it would be of no avail.

And with a desperate exertion of strength that well-nigh brought the blood in fatal force to his brow, he strained every muscle and nerve to bring that powerless, half-paralyzed form to the surface of that earth whose light and life he had never deemed it possible to see again.

But would it be in vain? Was Lena's danger, Bertie's noble efforts to be for naught?

They were questions to which the first glances of the white, corpse-like face might well answer.

"Yes. Let the dead rest in peace. Why risk the living for its sake?"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The bitter frown of fate's strange play,
The chilling straits of fortune changed;
All this and more thou'st borne for me,
Then how can I be false to thee?
I never will. I'll think of thee
Till fades the power of memory;
In weal or woe I'll think of thee.

It was the night of the memorable day when Elgiva had received the final blow to her every hope, her every brightness in life.

Marian, Oliver and the three who had been the principal agents alike in the deception and its cruel revelation had taken up their abode once more in the rooms that had of late been well-nigh abandoned by the mysterious and wayward housekeeper of Chetwode.

But Amice and her chaperons were about the only inhabitants of the castle who had appeared during the long, weary hours which elapsed since the scene that had both changed its mistress and cast a new shadow of mystery and guilt on the past history of its lordly race.

Elgiva had retired to her room with one sole demand as her last effort of heiress-ship, one prayer for solitude even from the crushed and broken-hearted man whose sins, whatever they might have been, were indeed heavily punished in the loss of the sole object of his love and interest.

Perhaps he was the most to be pitied, that frail, agonized old man, as he paced up and down his stately library with clasped hands and a wan, haggard despair in his pale, sharp features that from time to time escaped in broken murmurs from his lips.

"Mercy, mercy, for her if not for me," he muttered. "Ah, if I could but recall the past, if I could but reanimate the dead, blot out from the page of life's deeds that one terrible sin, then I could die happy—if I were in beggary. If tortures were spent on my poor, frail body; they could not equal those of my soul. But no, no. The dead are gone for ever, and their cry is mounting on high and bringing down vengeance on my head. Ay, and on her, that innocent one; while from the cold, proud girl who now calls me father I could snatch the coronet and its gilded gems that shall but prick and pierce her very soul in just retribution for a father's guilt. Yes, yes, the crime of the father will be visited on the child, and I—I—could I have the courage—might yet bring disgrace and ruin on the girl's pride and harsh haughtiness even in the hour of her exulting joy. Yet dare I? Can I? Alas, alas! I am weak and cowardly even in my remorse."

And he sank helpless and trembling into a chair, and, covering his face, fell, as it seemed, into a state of stupor, that scarcely dulled the sense of sorrow and of hard, hopeless anguish for the past, the present, and the future of his life.

But far different was the effect of that crushing revelation on the fair, sweet girl whose whole life

was thus changed, who was thus hurled from the very height of prosperity and pride to so ignoble and suffering a lot.

But, alas! for Elgiva the real anguish of her mind was from a far deeper and more hopeless source than the mere regret for worldly possessions and rank.

It was the fate of her beloved Juan, not her own, which occupied her thoughts, and which was being traced out and connected in her perplexed ideas with the startling revelations that had been that day made.

Could it be that if the counsel, the warnings of the strange, weird Marian had been accepted that she would have been left undisturbed in her false grandeur, and that Juan, or, as he should be termed, Ludovic of Chetwode, would have escaped his terrible fate as the husband of Amice?

She fancied she could find some clue through the many web, but her brain well-nigh whirled in the attempt, and she felt it would be impossible to sleep with that fear in her eyes, that terrible doubt and dawning penitence in her mind.

The castle was quiet now, the very domestic were either in their sleeping chambers or collected in hushed and wondering alarm in the hall.

So Elgiva cast a thick *peignoir* round her sable dress and hastened to seek an interview with the sole person who could resolve her doubts or guide her in her future actions—Marian Oliver.

She did not pause at the door of the woman's sanctum, save to give a slight tap; she entered. She felt too utterly engrossed, too despairingly powerful for such ceremonies.

And as she advanced into the apartment, bearing a lamp in her hand, which cast a white and unnatural light on the pale features and sable dress, she might well have passed as a dark, moving spirit come from some deep, distant region to demand redress for wrong and comfort in suffering.

Even Marian started as her eyes fell on the white, calm, despairing face that came slowly into view at that silent, and hush.

"Miserable Heaven! how like," she murmured, with her hands lifted for a moment as if to prevent the figure's approach. "Yes, it might be her—it is her living image as she is—not was," came half-inaudibly from her lips.

But Elgiva only caught the first words, and they gave her a mournful courage at the idea conjured up.

"You would speak of my mother," she said. "She is dead, is she not? I mean my real, not my supposed parent," she added, bitterly, as she placed her lamp on the table and sat down on a low seat near Marian's, in evident determination to gain her purpose ere she left the spot.

The woman sighed deeply.

"Poor child! So you are driven to me at last, to your only friend, your only known relative," she said. "Alas, alas! why were you so wilful, so incredulous, when I warned, commanded, implored you to save him and yourself from misery and degradation? Now I am powerless to help."

"My only relative! Then my mother was your sister, was she?" pursued Elgiva, not heeding the reproach for the moment.

Marian hesitated ere she replied.

"It matters not; it can work little woe now in any case, and perhaps might even give the gleam of hope and comfort if you know the truth," she said. "Yes, Elgiva, you are right in your suspicions. I am the sister of your mother, and the guardian who has striven to work the prosperity of her child. What then? You would not permit the control that alone could have saved you; and then I was at the mercy of the sole agent in the fraud save myself. That is the truth. But you must ask no more questions, for they cannot; they must not be replied to, and I am bound to secrecy by a tie you cannot even imagine in your young innocence."

"But is she living? At least you can tell me that," replied Elgiva, eagerly. "I must, I will know that which it most imports me to learn, and then I will try—yes, for his sake, try to forgive the past."

"You are wrong, altogether wrong," returned the woman. "I shall not, no, not if you kneel to me for the knowledge, reply to your question; your mother is as nothing to your childish memories, nothing to your youthful love. It matters not whether she is living or dead, and you will never learn that secret from my lips—never."

Elgiva's head was drawn proudly up.

"Marian Oliver," she said, calmly, "if indeed I have your blood in my veins, if you have had that affection for my mother that could prompt you to attempt so fatal a fraud for the exulting of her child, then you are bound to atone in some degree for the injury you have wrought. I demand from you a reply to my question as the price of any obedience of mine to your decree. At least it can lead to no hurtful results if you reply, for I shall still be as ignorant as ever as to the residence of my poor, ill-

fated, ill-guided mother should you be able to assure me of her life. Marian, Marian," she continued, clasping the woman's hand with convulsive vehemence, "have you no pity for one of your own blood, your own sort, for one so young and sorely stricken? At least let me have what comfort it is in your power to bestow."

Marian fairly groined under the earnest prayer of that fair, injured girl.

"Child, child, if you did but know, if you could but comprehend what you demand," she said, sadly, "then you might pity me more even than yourself in this strait. Will you not believe me when I tell you that life and more than life depend on my secrecy, and that the efforts and risks of long and weary years may be ruined were I to yield to such weakness? Elgiva, the day may come when you will know all. But till then, if you have filial love or woman's pity in your heart, you will forbear this questioning."

Elgiva shook her head mournfully.

"I accept your answer in the only sense it can bear," she replied. "Of course the dead can receive no hurt, and I may therefore hope and expect the blessing of a living mother as some compensation for the dire grief I have suffered and the loss of the sole father I ever knew. But, Marian, there is much beside I have to say," she continued. "You told me that the safety of my betrothed and the very continuance of the base fraud that has been practised hung on my refusal to yield up my claims to Lord Chetwode's love and hand. Was it so? At least I may demand some satisfaction as to the cause of my misery."

"Child, I have never deceived you. I have never let my tongue be stained with falsehood," was the reply, given with almost reproachful dignity. "And it is truth I have spoken, though alas, alas in vain—powerless to avert evil. Your bridal was the very turning-point on which your own and Lord Chetwode's destiny hung, and had it been relinquished then you would have preserved your rank and the dowry that came to you through the will of the old Marchioness of Saltaire, while the earl and his gipsy bride, the real Countess of Amice, would have been in happiness and life and love. Do you not regret, do you not believe that had the unhappy case would have reproached you for your selfish, wilful, rash love, Elgiva, my unfortunate child?"

The girl clasped her hands, and her dark eyes were raised to Heaven as she replied.

Then her words came firm and clear on the silence, her brilliant eyes met undimly the dark, piercing orbs of her relative.

"No," she said. "No, I judge him. I believe in him as myself. And I believe in his heart that to me, suffering, poverty, death, and disgrace would have been more welcome than his treachery. No, had Juan, had Ludovic, if such I should call him, deserted me from cowardice and caprice it would have been deeper grief than any other sorrow I could bear. His heart is mine in life and death, and mine is his. We cannot withdraw or give back the precious possessions. Now you have my final answer."

Marian sighed—nay, it was rather a groan than a sigh that escaped her labouring chest.

"Child, unhappy child, offspring of misery, it was indeed an evil destiny that presided over your birth. Yet you are fair and sweet and good, and she, the lawful child, the real heiress of rank and wealth, is hard and vain and selfish. So is it in this world," she added, sadly. "There was one as lovely and pure and good as human nature ever knew, and yet she suffered every agony of bereavement and sorrow and a broken heart for the sake of a worthless husband and a mistaken, weak rival."

Elgiva started and gazed anxiously in the woman's face.

"Is it my mother of whom you speak?" she asked, timidly.

Marian's lips formed in a touching smile that saddened and softened as they gazed on that sweet, pleading face.

"No, no. Do not torment me with useless inquiries," she said, sharply. "But to settle that question for ever I will tell you that I spoke of the mother of him who is gone for ever, the mother of him you love and have destroyed, of the fair young Countess of Chetwode and Arnhem who died on the very day that her child was taken from his home. But this is idle," she went on. "It is well at once to settle all doubts and hopes and fears on your part; Elgiva, and I will tell you this much if you will pledge your solemn word never to divulge the fragment of your story which I can dare to explain, and of which only my sense that you have been in a measure wronged would induce me to risk the revelation."

"Know then," she continued, after the promise had been given, "know that your mother betrayed her own faith and honor and her plight to one who loved her with the fervent, fierce love of a strong and unyielding nature. It is impossible to make you comprehend the risk she ran. It was such as to melt even his stern wrath; while I knelt to him, I

promised all, everything, to the very devotion of my life, if he would save her from the fearful consequences of her deed, and cover it by taking her for his wife. And after a time he consented. He drew the stricken creature under the shield of his name, his powerful protection. And you were born, Elgiva. Nay, do not look so fearful and flushed. At least you are free from the worst shame a child can know. You are the child of him who reasoned your mother from fearful punishment. But, alas! she did not merit, she did not cling to the shelter as she should. Her heart was with him who had betrayed her, and I purchased her safety from her husband's wrath by relieving him of her irritating presence and charge. Now you know all that I can tell, and if you venture another question it will be to no avail save of my deep, lasting displeasure."

Elgiva's tears had started and rushed down her white, cold cheeks as she listened.

"Ah, why did I live? Why have I thus brought misery and shame on the heads of all who have loved me?" she groaned, despairingly. "Marian, you might well renege him, dear Juan, from such a bride as poor, disgraced Elgiva."

The woman bent tenderly, pityingly over the crushed, bowed girl, who sank like a faded, broken blossom at her feet in the very depth of her shame and humility and pain.

"Not so, not so," she said, kindly. "It was not that. We, in our Zingara blood, can boast as ancient a descent as many a noble of the land, and as I tell you your birth is without stain or shame. No, it was another cause that worked the misery of which you complain; but had it not been for your obstinacy, your folly, you would never have known or suffered this humiliation. It can never be explained now, my child, never; but let it be a warning to you to obey in future the directions I may give you, and to trust my pledged and plighted word."

"Then whither am I to go? What would you have me do?" said the girl, sadly. "Surely I have some claim from the very suffering I have to endure for the sake of others. Marian, tell me where I can hide myself. I would work, do anything rather than remain in a place where I have no right, and where everything recalls to me the miserable past."

The woman paused.

"Then you would leave him, whom you have known since infancy as your father?" she said. "You would abandon him to the loveless attention of a strange and aggrieved girl, who deems herself but an injured victim to wrong and fraud?"

"What can I do? I have no right, no wish to remain in the house of Count Arnhem when his daughter is mistress," said the girl, plaintively. "And you would not have me stay as a servant and dependent where I have been a cherished and honoured daughter? Marian, do not ask it of me, for I cannot, I will not submit to such degradation."

"Well, well, perhaps you are right," said Marian, sadly. "And I do not complain of your spirit, more especially as it entails hardship and sorrow on your young head. But again I tell you that I cannot arrange any asylum for you without bringing suspicion on myself and ruin on others. Child, you are too young and lovely to go alone into the world. Are you willing to take a shelter under the care of your own real father, the husband of her who has so deeply erred and so deeply suffered? Will you ask that request at his hands?"

"Never," said Elgiva, "never. He can but look on me with hate and scorn. Marian, be content. I will seek employment. I will draw, play, sing, teach, anything that can bring me honest livelihood, and," she said, sadly, "at least I shall be free to love and seek for and pray for him, my beloved and lost one."

Marian started impatiently.

"For the dead," she said, "it is useless to seek or to pray, but there is one, and only one resource for you, if you have courage to attempt it. Would you go abroad, would you disguise yourself as I shall direct, and leave this land till all danger is over, and you can then remain here in peace and quietness as an unknown and forgotten waif in the world's wilderness?"

Elgiva hesitated.

"But, Marian, can you swear to me that he is dead? Do you know his fate? Am I indeed to weep over his murder, his grave?"

Marian shuddered in spite of her self-control.

"I believe it from my soul. What else could keep him from you and from his home, his possessions?" she said. "But listen, child. I shall be here. I will not quit these walls till all is over, till the sin is atoned, and the truth revealed. And if you are wise, if you really love this lost bridegroom, you will trust to the only one who has one chance to save or to obtain tidings of him, while you reserve in your own heart the strongest reason for his concealment, should he be still alive. It is a hard test I know," she said, "but where life is at stake you may well exert the self-control I counsel."

"I will, I will," said the girl, "I will trust you, Marian; but if you do deceive me, if you be not true and pitying to one so tried and miserable, there will descend a double curse on your head to that one of which you spoke but now."

"It is enough," she said, sadly; "Heaven knows my heart, and the burden it has to bear. But if I can save the helpless from the snares that are still waiting for them it may serve to atone for errors and lighten the fearful load which I have had for long years in my soul. Child, you call yourself miserable, but you are happy compared to me and to her who gave you birth, for you have loved and been loved in truth and innocence, and you are not burdened with a secret that would make the very walls groan with terror could they listen to its fearful revelation."

"Poor thing, poor thing," said Elgiva, her own sad heart melting at the despair that was painted in that face, sounding in that hollow voice. "I do believe, I do trust. Oh, Marian, be as a mother to me, for I am desolate and alone, and my sorrow is well nigh more than I can bear. Shall we not support each other, weep together over our woes?"

She would have clasped her arms round the woman's neck, but she sternly repulsed her.

"No, no," she said. "Not yet, not yet. If ever the day comes when this drama is played out, then it may avail to receive your girlish and innocent tears and be soothed by your fresh, unallied consolations. Now it is impossible, unlawful for me to receive caress or shed tears as a soft alleviation of my task. Go, child; leave me now. I must think and plan before I can carry out the scheme. Meanwhile no one shall molest you, no one shall dare to disturb your sacred privacy and sorrow."

Elgiva hesitated for a moment, but she saw that it would be useless to contend the point, and with a heart rather burdened than relieved, yet with a sense of anxious curiosity mingled with the dead weight of love, she returned to her apartment and lay down on her couch, to await the slender chances that sleep might visit her fevered eyes and drown her senses in blessed oblivion.

"Amice, my beloved, you will not keep me longer in suspense and anxiety," said Lord Easton to the new heiress as the duchess slumbered or dozed, slumber in a distant chair in the large saloon where they had retired after a strange and lonely dinner served to them in the absence of the host or the former mistress of the stately halls.

But Amice drew away slightly from his pleading look, his caressing touch.

"It is really too soon to speak so seriously or so positively, my lord, on such a subject," she said, with a gesture of haughty wilfulness that recalled the wild freedom of her gipsy days. "You forget that a few hours since when we spoke of this I was but Amice De Castro, without a certainty even of my origin or a sovereign of power that I could call my own. It is different now, and the duchess says an heiress cannot be engaged without proper forms and securities in the bond. You must talk to the count, and I will consider when I shall like it to be," she added, cautiously, as she perceived a dark frown stealing over his brow.

"Why, Amice, Lady Amice if you will, this is seasonably right or maidenly," he said, proudly. "Remember my love was given, my offer made to one portionless and nameless, and it can surely need little consideration for you to give your present rank and wealth to one who has certainly a counterbalancing station and fortune to offer in return."

"Scarcely, my lord, if we consider that before this wonderful revelation you thought me more than equal to yourself," said the girl, with a half-serious, half-arch smile, that in a measure softened the hardness of the words. "Did you not pretend to tell poor Amice De Castro that you deemed yourself a fortunate man to hope for her love, her hand? and yet you say you have enough to offer for the heiress of two ancient lines."

"Because I value Amice more highly than the heiress," said Lord Easton, with a reproachful yet tender air that should have been inexpressibly moving to the wayward girl, "because I deem that it is possible to measure fortune and rank and give measure for measure, weight for weight. But no one can estimate beauty and grace like my Amice's, no one can dare to say that he is worthy of such a bright star. Can you not understand, can you not value such devotion, such love as mine, Lady Amice?" he added, with a keen, earnest glance at the girl's flushed face.

"Yes, yes, I do, I will," she said, hastily, as she detected a warning gesture from the apparently sleeping duchess, to whom Lord Easton's back was so turned that he could not detect the sign. "Only give me a little time, let me enjoy for a brief space the feeling that you are wooing me as I like to be wooed, in all equality and as Lord Easton's bride should be won, and then I need not keep you longer in the terrible suspense you fear so much. Are you really afraid that I shall change my mind or that

some prince may run off with me, instead of the marquis to whom I am promised?" she added, in apparent playfulness.

But Lord Easton only started as she spoke and his face flushed with some hidden annoyance.

"It is a dangerous jest, Lady Amice," he said. "It would not be the first time that a prince has courted an heiress of Arnheim, and it is said that the woes which have ensued have all happened by some strange fatality since the unfortunate Elgiva rejected the fierce and dangerous love of Prince Charles of Mertz. Heaven save us both from such terrible and mysterious influences."

(To be continued.)

GLIMPSES OF SOCIETY.

CHAPTER XX.

VOLCHINI bowed gracefully as Bludge thus closed the conversation, and while the former mingled with the promenaders the latter turned down another street.

At that instant a policeman seized a ragged, miserable-looking boy who was in the act of taking a pocket-handkerchief from Bludge's pocket.

"I've got ye, have I?" said the policeman. "I've been looking for ye."

"Save me, and I'll show ye where to find the little gal, Nellie," whispered the boy, hurriedly, to Bludge. "Don't let him lag me, or you'll never find her!"

Bludge could hardly repress his astonishment, but what the boy said was of the utmost importance to him, so he turned to the policeman and said:

"My friend, let the poor little fellow go. Poverty and hunger probably urged him to such a petty offence, and I would not be so unmanly as to prosecute him."

"You don't know him, sir. It is Ragged Dick, the keenest little thafe in all the city, and—"

"Never mind his history, my friend. Here are ten shillings for you, and I'll try the effect of kindness on him."

The policeman said no more. The hand which grasped Dick's arm relaxed, and the boy was free.

At the same moment a man dressed in livery, who had been walking rapidly along the street, rushed forward, shouting:

"Catch that ragged boy! Catch him! He stole a case of diamonds from my mistress not an hour ago!"

"Diamonds?" shouted the policeman. "Och, turf an' thunder! Diamonds?"

He turned to seize the boy, but the latter had fled like a scudding cloud upon the swift storm-breath—fled away, across the street.

"Stop thafe!" cried the officer as he rushed wildly after him.

"Stop thief!" shouted the servant James as he followed in his wake.

"Stop thief!" cried a hundred voices, while the crowd rushed on, helter-skelter, after the flying child, as eager to see the poor little thief caught as they would be to see a tiger taken and caged.

"That servant comes from the house of Stella Hayden," said Mr. Barnabas Bludge, who did not follow the crowd or the thief. "It is she who has lost the diamonds—probably Ned Zane's last present. Good! She will not lose them, but he will, for she will soon fondle him into a replacement of them. I hope the boy will get away, though. I want to see him again, if he does indeed know where the child is hidden. Her possession would give me a power and an opportunity for revenge which I would almost barter life to possess."

Meantime, with a knowledge of streets and alleys which such rascals always possess, Ragged Dick had rushed on, turning here and there until the most of the shouting pursuers were left far behind. But James, the servant, still kept up the chase, for just in front of him he saw the tall, lank form of the policeman, who, up to every angle and turn, still rushed on after the boy, frequently almost having him in his grasp, then losing ground where the small form of the boy sprang round a sharp corner.

On they went until at last, with James a good distance behind, and no one else interested near, the policeman got his hand on the boy.

"The jewel-case—quick—give it up, and I'll let you run!" he said to the boy as he caught him by the neck.

The boy had no choice.

He knew it would be a short trial and a long prison job if he were taken in, and he knew the officer would let him go if he gave it up, for he would conceal the plunder and keep it himself.

So the case was slipped into the officer's hand in a second.

"Hit me, and double me up!" said the officer, in a low tone, as he hastily concealed the case inside his coat.

Ragged Dick understood the hint, struck out viciously, and the officer fell with a groan, so directly in the way of the servant in livery, who rushed up to his help, that James tripped and fell headlong over him, almost stunned by the force of the fall.

Both rose groaning a few seconds later and looked at each other.

Ragged Dick was gone.

He was nowhere in sight.

"It was a close race. I almost had him, but he struck me a blow that doubled me up!" said the officer.

"And he so little. What a monster! And now he is off clear," cried the astonished James.

"Yes, but I may have him yet. I know him when I see him. He'll be hung yet, the thavin' scoundrel. Don't you hope he will?"

James left the address of his mistress with the policeman in case the lad should be arrested, and then turned his face homeward to report how nearly he had captured the thief who had taken the diamonds.

The policeman did not go to the headquarters to report, but hurried off to a secure locality to examine his prize and learn its value.

"By Saint Patrick!" he ejaculated as a blaze of light greeted his astonished eyes.

A full set of diamonds, brilliants, ear-rings, necklace, brooch and bracelet, glittered there, a set of amethyst, and another ruby, each in a separate compartment of the satin-lined case.

"Halves!" said an unearthly voice, which fell on his ear like the knell of doom at that instant, from in front of him. "Halves, or I'll squeal."

When James returned to the residence of Madame Stella Hayden he found the detective for whom he had been sent already there, for it was on his return from the police-station that he caught sight of Ragged Dick.

Finding his mistress in conversation with the officer he was about to retire, but the idea came into his mind that he might give light to the officer if he told where the boy was last seen, and how nearly he had been captured, so he advanced, and said:

"If you please, madam, I have seen the thief, and we almost caught him."

"Who do you mean by we?" said the officer, turning sharply on him, and fixing his glance full in his eyes.

"Me and a policeman—a tall fellow, pock-marked, and a splendid runner. He beat me, and I am fast."

"Tell your story. Madam, excuse me, but I may get a clue from what he relates."

The lady bowed and the detective listened to the narrative of the servant.

Twice he stopped him—once to ask if the policeman was talking to the boy when he, James, first saw the latter, and again to ask if the policeman had time to talk to or take anything from the boy when the latter struck him.

To both questions James said no.

He was sure the boy was coming along, or going along the street when he hallooed: "Stop thief," and that he was alone; and that when the policeman received the blow which made him trip up the servant the policeman was reaching out his hand to seize the delinquent.

There was a smile of disbelief on the face of the detective as he heard the story, and he then asked a few more questions.

"Did you separate from this policeman the moment you were satisfied that the boy was beyond your reach?"

"No, sir," said James. "I was all out of breath and very dry, and I felt as if a drop of brandy would do me good. I told him so, and asked him to take some too. We went into a place and got some."

"Then you came direct here?"

"Yes, sir, as straight as I could come."

"Where did you leave this policeman?"

"Walking down the street by himself pretty fast."

"What was his number?"

"I cannot remember, sir, to a certainty."

James now took a hint from the eye of his mistress, and left the room.

"Do you think you can recover the jewels?" asked the lady.

"Possibly through a reward. That policeman, who I am confident possessed himself of them when he allowed a blow from the child to prostrate him so he could trip up and blind your servant to the escape of the original thief, is very cunning. If, as I feel very confident, he has the jewels, he will hide them until a large reward and 'no questions asked' appears, or until he can turn them into cash at a fair figure. I think I know the man, and he is old at this kind of work, though of late he has not been very successful. If you wish I will advertise, offering a reward of, say, a hundred pounds. You would be very willing to pay that, I presume."

"Yes, sir, and half as much more to you if you succeed."

"I will try, madam. But you must let me manage it all my own way. Have no communication with any one who comes to treat with you personally in the matter. Refer all to me."

"It shall be as you desire, sir."

"I think I can get your jewels back. I will catch the boy, for I know his haunts, and then the truth about the policeman will come."

"Should you get the boy, sir, promise him that I will not prosecute if he gives me the information which he said he could when he was here."

"I will bring him before you, and you can arrange it yourself, madam."

"Thank you, sir. Now permit me to offer you some wine, or, if you prefer it, brandy."

"Excuse me, madam. If I drank liquor I would be unfit for the profession I follow. No man can keep all his senses about him and indulge in strong drink. I never touch the article, though it is often useful to me. It throws secrets in my way which I might never reach otherwise. It makes men, and women too, forget to be prudent, and it throws the criminal off his guard so that detection becomes easy. It is a truth that intemperance is the source of most crime. And it also makes its discovery easy. You will not wonder when I tell you that I never, ill or well, allow one drop of alcohol to pass my lips."

The officer then bowed and retired.

In a few moments James made his reappearance. "A lady has arrived, madam," he announced.

"Here is her card."

"Ah, the fair Georgina. Show her into my private boudoir and say I will soon join her. Have choice refreshments ready when I enter."

James bowed, and hastened to do his errand, while the lady said:

"Now for a change of voice and manner as well as dress. No accent like that of the 'Veiled Prophetess' must reach her ears, or she may take the alarm. And my dress, Alas! for my lost jewels it must be plain. I would have come before her in dazzling splendour but for that. My purple velvet with lace would be a mockery without pearls and diamonds. The pearls I have—but my diamonds are gone."

James again appeared and broke in on the soliloquy of his mistress.

"Mr. Zane, madam, and he will not wait. He is coming right in."

"Let him come—he is ever welcome."

The face of the siren lighted with a gracious smile as Edward Zane, flushed and excited, came into the room.

"You have had a loss, my adorable Stella," he cried.

"Yes, a sad one—all my jewels, Edward, but I only care for those you gave me!" she answered. "How did you hear of it?"

"No matter. I promised not to tell. But I did hear of it, and I hastened instantly to replace your loss with a still richer set. Here it is."

The lady almost screamed with delight when she opened the jewel-case he now handed to her.

A blaze of light almost dazzled her eyes; so brilliant and large were the new jewels.

"Oh, Edward, Edward, how shall I recompense you for this princely gift? That too when I was sadly thinking how poorly I would be dressed for your reception to-night. How can I reward you?"

"By loving me, Stella, as I love you, forgetful of all else on earth."

"I do. But will you pardon me for something I have done to-day, dear Edward? Say yes, and I will hasten to dress like the queen you say that I am."

"Yes, a thousand times yes. I care not what it is so that it has not been forgetfulness of me."

"Anything, everything but that, dear one! But to explain. Our mutual friend, Count Volchini—"

"A splendid fellow—the president of my club."

"Well, he is wild in love with a young lady whom he cannot meet *tête-à-tête* without interruption where she resides. He begged me to invite her to supper, or to spend the evening here so he could meet her and enjoy her company."

"Oh, I hope you said yes."

"I did; and it was that I wished you to forgive me for."

"Forgive, my darling Stella! Why, you could not have pleased me better."

"Now, love, excuse me, I must go to dress and then visit my fair guest, who is in my boudoir. I hear Volchini coming. Tell him to stay here with you until I return. Then I will escort you both into the presence of his divinity, and I fear a dangerous rival to what you term my beauty."

"Your rival does not live, beautiful Stella!" said the enamoured and bewitched man. "Make haste back, for when you are out of my sight I am in agony."

Stella went out just an instant before Volchini entered the room.

"My dear count, how glad I am to see you here," cried Zane, advancing, and warmly shaking his gloved hand. "Stella just told me you were coming. She has gone to dress, and then will return and take you to your divinity, whom she has got here somewhere."

"I am glad to hear it—you look exquisitely well to-night, Mr. Zane. Your trip on the water agreed with you, it seems."

"Yes—you heard of it: Who told you?"

"Mr. Bludge."

"Bludge—ah, yes, splendid fellow. Three bottles don't budge him. He says I'll come to it by-and-bye, if I only keep on."

"Doubtless," said the count, smiling.

"Stella will look glorious to-night. She had the diamonds stolen from her that I gave her. I heard of it and instantly purchased a new set."

"Ah! Who abstracted them?"

"A boy named Ragged Dick."

"Shocking. What a vulgar cognomen. You were very kind to purchase a new set. You deserve a princely fortune, your acts are so princely."

"Oh, count, I owe you one for that. I wish Stella would hurry down; I am terribly dry. I haven't drunk a drop for an hour."

"I will show you a secret of the house which will give immediate relief in your case," said the count, with a smile.

So saying he went to what appeared to be a marble-topped table, with a flower vase in the centre.

The top of the table, on being revolved, exhibited an oblong case of wines and liquors beneath, with glasses.

"Well, well; how snug," said Zane as he filled a glass and tossed off its contents. "But hark, I hear her coming."

CHAPTER XXI.

WHEN Georgine, dressed in her best, a maroon-coloured silk, purchased by a fond father in the "better days" of the past, entered the boudoir of Madame Stella she was struck with amazement.

In the better days just alluded to she had lived in a splendid home, furnished, as she thought, incomparably well, but never had she seen such gorgeous appointments as here surrounded her.

The lofty room was painted overhead in fresco, the scenes being gorgeous Italian landscapes, with fountains and flowers, statues and groups of lovely nymphs, so arranged amid trees and bowers as to charm the classic eye. Where lace and satin draperies did not conceal the wall to right and left mirrors of spotless brilliance, extending from the ceiling to the floor, reflected not only her own elegant figure but every article in the room.

A yielding carpet of flowered velvet was beneath her feet, while sofas, ottomans, and fauteuils carved in lovely patterns and cushioned with flowered satin, were scattered, not arranged, here and there.

A grand piano was open at one end of the room, while near it both harp and guitar invited the touch of an accomplished hand.

Sweetest of all, in an alcove where flowers fresh-blossoming seemed to be growing rather than to have been placed in vases, a tiny fountain rose and sparkled in what seemed to be a soft sunlight piercing a dreamy haze, but what was really a strong gaslight beneath pink shades of ground glass. The murmur of the fountain, the beauty of the flowers, the rich furniture, all meeting both ear and eye when she was left alone in this apartment, caused her to breathe out in a sigh:

"Oh, that this were my home. What exquisite taste is here displayed. I wonder if the count has ever seen it! No. The servant said no one but his lady ever entered here, so I need not fear interruption till she comes to welcome me. I will try the piano—it will not be wrong. Perhaps I can sing, for, oh, it seems as if this should be the home of melody!"

Thirsty the beautiful girl went to the fountain, where she saw a golden cup, indicating that the fountain was used sometimes for drinking purposes, and held the cup beneath the sparkling jet. It was ice-cold, and when she raised the cup to her lips she found it not to be water as she supposed, but a delicious kind of lemonade, or an ambrosial drink so pleasant she could not put the cup down until it was empty.

"What luxury combined with beauty!" she murmured. "It is so strange. I have heard of fountains of lemonade, fountains in public fairs or great exhibitions, but never before in a private house. This lady must be immensely wealthy."

Georgine, after drinking from the fountain, felt a strange, sweet feeling passing through every vein, but she had not noticed a taste of wine in the drink and only thought it was the effect of thirst assuaged and the lovely surroundings which steeped her senses in a dreamy pleasure.

Sitting down to the piano, she ran her fingers over

the splendid instrument, a better one than she had ever touched before, and then lifted her voice in song.

Why she should choose that sad, yet lovely melody "The Mocking Bird," she could not have told had she been asked, but it was the first that came to mind, and it rose from her lips in a flood of harmony which filled the lofty room.

When she closed the song a new surprise came upon her.

Above, so suspended that they seemed to be in the ceiling, among the painted flowers, were several bird-cages, and from these a half-dozen sweet-throated canaries now serenaded the fair singer, waking up echoes on every side.

"Oh, this is Paradise. I could live here for ever!" murmured Georgine. "It is a dream—an enchantment. Oh, no, no—I came to meet my Volchini, and perhaps this surprise is all his. There may be no lady at all to meet me, and this may be a home prepared for me. Oh, that he would come and tell me what it means. Oh, how sweetly the birds sing. Silent till I sang, they seem to thank me for my music. I will sing them a new song—one that I wrote for my love, my own true love."

And with a brilliant prelude on the piano she sang these words:

"For ever thine! For ever thine!
Sweet is the thought to me!
My heart is thine, thy heart is mine,
With both the gift was free.
No power on earth can ever change
The truth that we avow;
No mortal hand our hearts estrange,
Or chill love's fervent glow.
For ever thine! For ever thine!
We cannot live apart;
Each fondly worships at a shrine
Built in the other's heart.
No sad separate hopes we know—
As ivy clings to oak
When furious tempests blow
So we our fate invoke!"

She paused and again the bird-echoes rang through the room, the little minstrels seeming to strive to reward her for her melody.

"Oh, this is like Paradise!" she murmured. "But where can the lady be—or the count? They surely will not leave me here alone for a long time. Even Paradise in solitude would not be enjoyable!"

There was a sound behind her, a noise like the moving of a wheel, and she turned quickly to see that which for a second almost took her breath away.

So surprised that she could not speak, Georgine stood and saw what appeared to be the ceiling at the end of the room near the piano, part in the middle, revealing beyond a chamber of a still more gorgeous style of furniture, and in its centre, one standing who looked so beautiful, so queenly, that the surprised girl could see nothing else, or she might have been surprised at the surroundings in statues and in pictures.

Madame Stella, for it was she, dressed in her richest style, glittering with jewels, gave the fair girl no time to think, scarce a second in which to recover from a new surprise, but stepping forward with a welcoming smile, a face expressive of love and admiration, fondly no one could better assume, cried out:

"Welcome, dear young lady, welcome to my poor hospitality. The count has given such a glowing description of your charms of mind and person that I am in love with you already!"

Before Georgine could say a word the lady threw her jewelled arms about her and kissed her with every semblance of affection.

Surprised and gratified as well by such a welcome from this beautiful and wealthy lady, whom she believed through the count's representations to be one of the first in position and fashion, Georgine with blushes returned the salute and murmured:

"Oh, madam, you are too kind! I fear the count has flattered me too much in his descriptions!"

"I declare he has not flattered you. You are lovely in face—such a figure! Oh, you are splendid—almost regal. But the count must dress you in queenly style, cover you with jewels. Such beauty deserves it. But you are rather pale, dear—a glass of light wine will heighten your colour and make you still more beautiful. Come and see the effect of magic!"

The lady led Georgine to the fountain just alluded to.

"I have tasted this—it seemed like a delicious lemonade!" said Georgine.

The lady touched a spring—the fountain ceased to play, and in a moment its basin was empty. She then touched another spring and with an aroma which filled the air an amber-coloured wine sprang from the jet.

"Taste that, sweet girl. Fear not—it will not inebriate—it will only enliven you a little and carry colour to your cheek. See, love; I set the example!"

The lady drank a cup full with evident relish.

"I do not drink wine!" said Georgine, timidly.

"Pray excuse me!"

"Oh, nonsense, my dear. This is as harmless as the lemonade you drank. Take a glass to give you colour so that you may look very, very best when we meet the count, as we shall in a little while—a very few moments, indeed, for he waits us with impatience in my audience-room!"

How could Georgine refuse? The lady urged her so kindly, and with such reasons. She did wish to look her very best when she went into his presence with that queenly woman, for she began to wonder how she could charm him in the presence of one so beautiful as Madame Stella.

She drank the wine, and in an instant a delicious thrill seemed to run through every vein. She knew before she glanced into a full-length mirror that her cheeks were all aglow with a richer colour, her eyes sparkling with a new light.

"Oh, you beauty—you beauty! The count will worship you!" cried Madame Stella as she surveyed the blushing, the really lovely girl. "Come now—come. I will not defer his happiness or yours—it would be cruel!"

Since the count had discovered the secret buffet to Edward Zane, and the latter had taken advantage of the discovery in several glasses of wine, the young man had not felt very anxious to see his "divinity," as he termed Madame Stella. He had indeed become so much a slave to the wine-cup through his short season of excess that he lived more in its excitement than in any other way.

Edward Zane was not tipsy, he was only "well primed," to use a common phrase, when Madame Stella entered with Georgine on her arm to welcome him and the count and conduct her visitors to the banquet-room.

"Oh, my Georgine! how transcendently lovely you are to-night!" whispered the count as he rushed to her side before he introduced her to Zane, who was as usual intent only on his divinity—so much so, indeed, that he barely glanced at Georgine when introduced, and, with a single bow, turned again to Madame Stella.

This gratified the count, for he was fearful that the beauty of a new face and form might attract more notice than he desired from one so fickle as he knew Zane to be.

A few seconds only were passed in salutations and compliments, then, taking the arm of her latest dupe, Madame Stella led the way to the elegant chamber where a delicious banquet waited their coming—such a banquet as Georgine had never seen upon a table before, served on Sèvres china and plate of gold and silver.

(To be continued.)

THE Rev. J. N. Dalton, M.A., of Clare College, Cambridge, has been appointed tutor to the young Princes Albert Victor and George of Wales. Mr. Dalton graduated B.A. in 1863, when he obtained a third class in the classical tripos. In the following year he obtained a first class in theological honours, a Crossed scholarship, and a Scholarship prize.

GIGANTIC EEL.—On the receding of the tide on the 6th ult. near the Brow Well, in the parish of Ruthwell, a marine lamprey or eel was found by Mr. George Gunning. It was brought to Clarendonfield for the examination of the curious there, not without difficulty, on account of its weight. When weighed and measured by Mr. S. Cowan the following were the results: Weight 86 lbs., length 6 feet, circumference in middle 2½ feet, its tail at top 7 in. broad. It has been skinned, and would do for an overall waterproof covering for any man of six feet.

EXTRAORDINARY CASE OF LONGEVITY.—There died recently at Kenyon, county of Glengarry, Ont., a woman named Ann Campbell, at the extraordinarily advanced age of 130 years. From particulars furnished by a contemporary we learn that Ann was born in the parish of Bracondale, in Skye, Scotland, in 1742, exactly three years before the hopes of Prince Charlie were extinguished on Culloden Moor. While living in Skye she was engaged as dairymaid in the families of some of the most well-known gentlemen on that island. In 1830 she emigrated to Canada and took up her abode in Kenyon, where she remained till her death. The deceased retained all her faculties to the last moment, and only a few days before her death was engaged in attending to dairy duties. Deceased always enjoyed good health, and had reluctance to see any medical gentleman except when any friendly business demanded it.

VESEVUS.—Professor Luigi Palmieri, who, it will be remembered, pursued his observations during the late eruption of Mount Vesuvius even when the floods of lava threatened to convert the building in which he was sheltered into a furnace, has published a highly interesting brochure on the various phases of the terrible phenomenon which he had predicted, detailing, in fact, almost hour by hour, the progress of the burning torrent, and the transformation which the crater of the mountain underwent. The little work—illustrated by seven wood engravings, showing the state of the cone during the years 1870, 1871,

and 1872—shows the extraordinary modifications caused by the terrible eruption of the 26th of April. In conclusion Professor Palmieri records the material indications which may be of use in future in foretelling coming convulsions of Vesuvius, and discusses the nature of the lava, metals, gases, and acids which the mountain showers forth during eruptions. A more interesting scientific history, and disquisition could scarcely be produced.

FIGHTING WITH FATE.

CHAPTER X.LV.

WHILE the events which we have chronicled were transpiring in London other events were occurring down in Huntingdonshire which materially affected the fortunes of Darrel Moor and Hilda Floyd.

These events were of the most important and startling character, and their result was to render the marriage of Moor to Miss Floyd perfectly legal and valid and to free Honor Gilt from all legal or other association with Moor's fortunes.

These events we will now hasten to narrate.

Upon the evening in which Hilda Floyd had so recklessly insulted and defied Lord Waldemar—the evening before the clandestine marriage in the parish church of St. Jude's—Miss Bing made doors and windows all secure at the lonely house of the Cyppresses down among the fens, and sat down upon a tall-backed splintwood chair before the broad hearth.

A bright wood fire was blazing, the great back-log burned slowly, a faintly resinous odour filled the air, and the ruddy light streamed out beyond the tiled fireplace over the red brick floor and into the distant corners. A single candle burned on the deal table.

The hour was about ten. The tea-kettle was beginning to hum and to emit a light steam from its crooked spout as it swung gently above the blaze.

Miss Bing's hands were laid idly upon her knees; but although her hands were idle her brain was busy, as was evidenced by her nervous tremors and by her frequent starts and glances over her shoulder.

She was thinking of the "ghost" that devoured her stores, and flitted through her house, whispering through key-holes and rustling through the halls.

She looked quickly and sharply behind her, fancying the shadows in the corners peopled with lurking ghosts.

But not one revealing his presence, she went to the pantry and brought out a bottle half filled with brandy, and proceeded to concoct a drink with hot water, sugar and liquor.

Having imbibed this, but feeling the solitude unbearably oppressive, she resolved to carry up a little pot of tea to her young prisoner, muttering:

"Any company is better than none. And I'm that afraid that I don't dare to go to my own room. I keep expecting the ghost to pounce out upon me!"

"I've brought you up some tea, miss," said the spinster, depositing the tray on a table and pushing the latter toward Honor.

The girl looked up in surprise at the unwonted attention.

"I was lonely downstairs," said Miss Bing, half ashamed at her superstition, "and any company when one is lonely is better than none."

"Perhaps so," said Honor, "but I don't want the tea. I have eaten my regular meals without suspicion, Miss Bing, but I have reason to distrust any special kindnesses from you."

"The tea isn't dropped, if you mean that," said the woman, sharply. "I brought it up to have the excuse of seeking your company for a few moments. The house is haunted, that's what it is, and I don't like to be in them great rooms alone."

"I don't believe in ghosts," said Honor. "Are you sure that you don't get up in your sleep, Miss Bing? Last night, and every night since I have been here, some one has whistled through the key-hole of my door, and tried my latch, and muttered—"

"Lur' sakes!" ejaculated Miss Bing, in terror. "Why didn't you speak of it before?"

"Because I supposed it a part of your plan to terrify me into submission to Darrel Moor's will," declared the girl. "And I am not sure now that such is not the case."

"But I vow," said Miss Bing, shuddering, "that it was not I. I don't walk in my sleep. And I have heard the same noises at my door and in the hall. It's the ghost!"

Her terror was unmistakably genuine.

"These sounds may be susceptible of a very simple explanation," said Honor. "I don't believe that they are supernatural."

"Then what do you think of cooked food disappearing from my pantry every night?" demanded Miss Bing—"of ale and butter and milk being car-

ried off by the quantity?—of my new Witney blankets disappearing bodily without leaving so much as a thread of lint? Who took 'em?"

"Some tramp, perhaps."

"Some tramp! Why, I've searched the house from top to bottom every day, and the windows and doors all shut! Some tramp indeed!" scoffed Miss Bing. "I tell you, miss, it's a ghost!"

Honor offered no farther objections to Miss Bing's theory, but her own opinion remained unchanged.

"I do not want the tea, Miss Bing," she observed, pushing the table from her. "I would like a cup of water. I am thirsty to-night."

"I'll get the water, miss, and if you feel wakeful, like, which I do, I'll make bold to sit with you an hour or more," said Miss Bing. "I am not sleepy, and I don't like to go to bed."

Honor assented to the proposed visit, and Miss Bing took up the tray, with the lighted candle upon it, and went out into the hall. The key was in the outside of the lock of Honor's room. Miss Bing merely turned the key, shooting the bolt home, but without withdrawing the key, as she was to return immediately.

Honor heard her cross the hall to the staircase landings. Then a sudden shriek of horror in Miss Bing's voice rent the air, the tray and dishes went clattering down the stairs, and there followed the sound of two heavy falling bodies, bumping at every step, and landing with a dull thud upon the brick floor of the lower hall.

Honor comprehended that Miss Bing had fallen downstairs. She flew to her door and listened. There came up to her a series of appalling shrieks from the throat of Miss Bing, intermingled with horrible groans, apparently emanating from another person.

Honor beat her small fists upon her door, rattling a tattoo that resounded through the great hall outside.

"Here I am!" she cried. "Let me out! let me out!"

There was a sound of a struggle in the hall below, a sound of steps on the stairs, and a swift rush in the hall without, then a whistling was heard through the keyhole of the door—a whistling like that Honor had heard for so many nights. The girl shrank back in disappointment and a vague alarm. A low, confused sort of muttering followed, the key was turned in the lock, and the door was flung open.

Honor Gilt stood face to face with the "ghost" of the Cyppresses!

It was no shadowy shape that confronted her, no spirit such as Miss Bing's heated imagination had conceived. But it was scarcely less strange, wild and terrifying.

It was a living woman! yet one who seemed more like a ghost than a living breathing creature.

She was tall and emaciated, and wore a woollen blanket folded around her like a toga. Her fair hair, ragged and uneven, and dabbled in warm, wet blood, strayed over her shoulders.

Her big blue eyes stood out from the dead and awful whiteness of her face burning like corpse-lights.

Upon her forehead was a frightful open wound from which the blood dripped slowly, and she clutched her chest as if a terrible agony were raging within.

If she were not a ghost, she seemed a dying woman, yet there was an aspect of faded grandeur about her, a look of decayed majesty, a gleam of former beauty.

She could not have been over thirty years of age, but she looked fifty.

"Who are you?" she asked, regarding the girl wonderingly, and coming into the room. "What are you doing here? This house is mine."

Miss Bing had gathered herself up from the brick hall floor, and now came up the stairs and stood in Honor's doorway.

The conviction that her visitor was human had forced itself upon her mind, and she drew from her bosom a pistol with which Moor's valet had armed her, and prepared to stand guard over her captive.

Miss Bing had been more frightened than hurt. On reaching the hall landing a grotesque figure all in white—one of the stolen Witney blankets—had arisen from a crouching position among the shadows, and pounced upon the woman with mutterings of menace.

In her horror and alarm Miss Bing had lost her footing, and fallen down the stairs, hurting her assailant before her. The intruder had received the full force of the fall, Miss Bing coming heavily upon her; but in Miss Bing's fright the singular intruder escaped from her and returned up the stairs, being attracted to the prisoner's door by Honor's call.

The young girl had seen at a glance that the intruder was a lunatic.

The restless glare of the big burning eyes testified that the brain behind them was diseased.

She deemed it best to soothe the terrible-looking being.

"I am Honor Gilt," she answered, calmly, slowly retreating. "Who are you?"

The woman uttered a wild, discordant laugh, and glanced towards the mirror on the wall.

"I?" she said. "I am the beautiful queen of tragedy. Ha, ha! I am La Belle Carmine! La Belle Carmine for ever! *Vive la bagatelle!*"

The last words were spoken gaspingly. She sank down in a chair, clenching frantically at her breast.

Miss Bing started as the name fell on her ear. She had heard from Moor's valet years before that his master, Darrel Moor, had wedded a beautiful young actress named Carmine Hoff, and known as La Belle Carmine.

She advanced into the room, locking the door on the inner side, and putting the key in her pocket. "So you are the ghost who haunts the Cyppresses?" she demanded, approaching the mad woman.

"Yes," and a gleam of cunning sparkled in the woman's fading eyes. "I took your bread and meat."

"Oh, yes, and the blankets. Oh, it was very cold up in the little close stable loft where I hid all the day, and I grew hungry too. I crept in at one of the cellar windows where the catch was loose. You were keen, but not so keen as I. Why, I have sharpened wit with my enemies for all these years. They call me mad. I am not mad. Parfets and the rest are mad—not I."

"What is your name?" cried Miss Bing.

"What's in a name?" muttered the mad woman. "Ah, the pain is here!" and she caught at her breast.

"The pain! the pain!"

"She has received some internal injury," said Miss Bing, turning to Honor. "She attacked me on the stairs and we fell down together, and I fell full upon her. I daresay she has crushed in her ribs. She looks as if she were dying."

"She must have escaped from some place of confinement recently," said Honor, "and she has hidden in the stable loft at the Cyppresses. Her words proclaim how she has procured her sustenance. She must have arrived at about the time we came."

The woman interrupted with a tragic gesture.

The red drops of blood were dripping slowly down her face, and her wild, weird eyes were fast losing their terrible brilliancy.

"I am La Belle Carmine," she said, as if uttering a refrain often upon her lips. "They called me Carmine Hoff, but I was not. I tell you I was legally married to him. If he denies it then let the traitor die! You'll find the register of the marriage at Somerset House, and in the books at Saint Helen's. I am his wife. Who calls me Carmine Hoff?"

She raised her drooping head with a defiant air. "No one—no one!" said Honor, pityingly, kneeling by the woman's side and taking in hers the fluttering hand. "Miss Bing, her pulse is falling. She must have received some terrible internal injury. We will lay her upon my bed and look to her wounds."

They did so.

The wound upon the woman's head was dressed by Honor's own hands with gentleness and even tenderness.

They examined her breast.

Several of her ribs were broken, and Miss Bing declared that one of them had been driven into the woman's heart.

"We can do nothing for her," said the jailer. "She is already dying. She'll last but a few minutes longer. See how gray her face is—how pinched her nose; and she is picking at the blanket. That's a sure sign of death."

"Poor thing!" sighed Honor, bending over her and stroking the damp white brows softly. "Whoever she is, some one has loved her."

The woman looked up with a pitiful and fleeting smile.

"Ah, yes," she whispered. "Darrel loved me once! How he praised my fair hair and my blue eyes! Darrel loved me!"

"Darrel?"

"Yes, my husband, you know. He is my husband, even if he denies it. How hard they look down upon me at Baden-Baden! I tell you I was—I am—his lawful wife. He grew tired of me. He is very fickle. It's his nature, but he is very handsome, and I loved him. He told me he should never acknowledge our marriage, but he will—he must. I'll go to the old square himself—I'll get on my knees to him and plead for my Darrel. What! shall our two lives be ruined for the sake of that old man's pride? Darrel shall love me again—Darrel! Darrel!"

Her voice rose to a shrill scream.

"Don't talk!" commanded Miss Bing.

"Oh, yes, speak!" cried Honor Gilt, falling on her knees beside the bed. "Who is this Darrel—who is your husband?"

The dying woman stroked the girl's golden hair as she answered:

"Ah, he's nothing to you, girl. He belongs to me. We were married in the church at Brighton. He took me with him to Germany, but you think, perhaps, because he allowed the impression to go out that he was not married to me, I say he was. I can prove it. Look for the registry at Somerset House. I am his lawful, honest wife. But he is cruel, terrible. He hates me. Is—that old Parfitt?"

She seemed to hearken for a footstep on the stairs.

"It's no one," said Miss Bing. "You must go to sleep."

"I'm sleepy," the woman murmured. "My head is better. The pain is easing. I want to rest."

She was silent for some minutes, clinging to Honor's hand, and seeming to doze.

Suddenly she opened her eyes, and her glances wandered.

Those big blue eyes had lost their restless glare now, but were strangely staring. The expression of her face had changed. A softness and sweetness seemed to mantle the worn, pinched features. In her last moments at least a fragment of her reason had come back to her.

"I think I am dying," she said, softly. "Where's Darrel? Call my husband."

"He is not here," said Honor.

"Not here. Oh, I remember now. He says that he will not own me as his wife. He is afraid of his uncle. He repents our marriage. His short-lived infatuation is over. Have I been ill long?"

"Yes, some time, I think," said Honor, gently.

"I don't remember your faces. Do you think I'm dying?"

"Yes, dear," answered Honor, pitifully. "Shall I pray for you?"

"There's no time," said the dying woman. "But it's all right. I've always prayed for myself, you know, and I'm not afraid to die. I don't remember, somehow—how did I get hurt? Never mind; the time is short. Tell Darrel—that he need never appeal to old Squire Floyd, now. Give Darrel my last message."

The voice faltered.

"What shall I tell him?" asked Honor. "Who is he?"

The heavy lids lifted again, disclosing the glazing eyes.

The white and rigid lips parted, and the dying voice slowly fluttered out the words:

"Tell Darrel—Moer—his wife—is dead. He is free."

The eyelids closed again, a quick breath came from the still parted lips, and the soul of Darrel Moer's wronged wife was gone.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE last words of the dying woman, faint and gasping as they were, thrilled through the soul of Honor Gilt like a voice from Heaven.

She arose from her knees by the bedside, and said to Miss Bing, in a hushed voice:

"You heard? you heard? She was the wife of Darrel Moer!"

"Yes, I heard," she replied, with an awe-stricken glance at the pale, inanimate figure. "He married her ten years ago. I thought she was dead."

"Was he ever divorced from her?"

"No. The marriage was never publicly owned."

"But he was married to her legally?"

"He was."

The girl's lovely face glowed with sudden rapture.

"Then I am not his wife!" she cried. "His wife lies here. A marriage during her lifetime would be null and void. I am not his wife. Oh, Heaven be thanked!"

She knelt down again by the bed and breathed forth her great gratitude.

Presently she looked up, pale yet blissful, and raised the lifeless hand of Darrel Moer's mad wife to her lips.

She arose and pressed upon the wan, peaceful face, from which the haggard look was going, a gentle kiss.

"And if I am not Moer's wife," said Honor, after a long pause, "he is now free to marry again. He told me he should marry Miss Floyd to-morrow. That marriage will be legal. Miss Floyd will be his lawful wife."

"Yes," said Miss Bing. "There will be no crime in his marriage with her."

"As my marriage to him is null and void, as I have been no more to him since it was contracted than a perfect stranger, he has no longer even the authority of a husband to confine me in this house. Providence has freed me through this poor woman," and Honor looked reverently at the form of the dead Carmine Moer. "I am willing now to pledge my word that I and my friends will not expose Darrel Moer's wickedness. I would not become his confederate and assist him to wrong Miss Floyd, but as his mar-

riage with her will now be legal I will promise not to interfere with it. This promise was all that Moer required of me."

"No doubt he will be glad to receive it."

"You must go at once to the farmer's house for aid," said the girl. "This body must be cared for, and preparations made for a funeral. Her friends—she must have some—must be notified. A telegram must be sent to her husband. The farmer must send me in some conveyance to the station to-night so that I can be in London in the morning."

"Not so fast, miss," exclaimed Miss Bing. "I have no doubt that Mr. Moer will gladly release you and send you home, but I must write to him and get his answer. That will take a day or two. You must wait during that time as patiently as you can. I received my instructions from him through my brother, and I must have his orders to release you. You shall be treated well while you stay, and I don't doubt your stay here will be short."

From this decision no entreaties could move the woman. She had softened a moment in the presence of death, but she was already her grim self again.

"I shall take the body into my room," said Miss Bing. "I have no more fear of ghosts. You ought to try to sleep."

She unlocked the door leading into her own chamber, and lifting the emaciated dead body in her strong arms she carried it in and laid it upon her own bed.

Honor followed her into the room, and tried the door leading into the hall, but it was locked.

"There's no escape for you," said the woman, grimly. "You have been patient these three weeks. Be patient two days longer. I promise you your freedom as soon as I can hear from my brother. Mr. Moer has no object in detaining you here longer."

She pushed Honor into her own room and locked the door upon her. Then she took a candle and searched the hall and stairs for spots of blood, effacing them carefully with a wet cloth.

"The woman must be got out of the house," she said to herself. "I won't have her body under my roof till morning. I must dispose of her myself. I shall have the stable loft where she has hidden so long. That is the only thing to be done."

There was a square opening overhead in the floor of the loft, which had once been covered by a trap-door.

Acting upon a suddenly conceived idea, Judith Bing laid the body down upon its face under the opening, muttering:

"When she is found her wounds will be attributed to a fall from the loft. The dust and dirt of the floor will hide the fact that her wound has been washed. That trouble is disposed of."

She returned to the house.

"Mr. Moer would give a good deal to know that she is dead, and that his marriage to Miss Gilt was a mere farce, and that he is free to marry Miss Floyd," she thought. "I'll write to Watson in the morning."

She sat before the fire all night, sleepless and watchful, thinking of the dead body on the stable floor, of Darrel Moer's prospects, and of Honor Gilt. Daylight came, and found her still watchful.

She prepared Honor's breakfast and took it up to her.

Miss Bing returned to the kitchen, and wrote her letter to Darrel Moer, under cover to her brother. It was scarcely finished when a light spring cart drove up the paved way leading from the highway to the house, and came around the dwelling, halting at the rear door.

A driver, an elderly, sallow-faced man, sprang out, and knocked loudly at the door of the rear hall with the handle of his whip.

Miss Bing coughed her letter and writing materials in her table drawer, and with a wildly beating heart answered the summons.

The man raised his hat to her respectfully.

"Excuse me, madam," he said, "but I have ventured to stop here in the hope that you can give me some information. I am in search of an escaped lunatic—a woman. She has been missing from her home some three or four weeks. Doctor Parfitt, who has had her in charge, has had men in search of her ever since she disappeared, as she is dangerous to be at large. I have succeeded in tracing her in this direction. She was seen in the Deep Fen three weeks ago, without shoes or stockings or head covering. Have you seen anything of her?"

"Nothing at all," said Miss Bing, promptly. "A lunatic! Oh, dear! we shall be murdered."

"If she should come this way be good enough to telegraph to Doctor Parfitt at the Retreat, near Oxford," said the stranger, politely. "The poor creature is a lady. Her name is Carmine Roff, and she was an actress, but she believes herself to be married to some young sprig of nobility. I have been away

from the Retreat for a week, searching all the fens within some miles of this place, thinking that she may have died of exposure. I must go back to-day. It is possible that she may have been already found by others who are searching."

"I hope so," said Miss Bing. "It does give me such a turn to hear of lunatics being at large. I was frightened yesterday, and I've not got back my spirits since. Some person, a tramp I should say, has broken into my house every night and stolen food and blankets, and yesterday I fancied I saw a wild-looking face at the stable window."

"Let me look into your stable, madam," interrupted the stranger, eagerly. "The face you saw may be Miss Roff's. She is very shy and avoids people. It would be like her to hide in an unused stable, and steal her supplies from the house."

He hurried to the stable, Miss Bing following.

When he opened the door his first glance fell upon the prostrate body. He bounded toward it, and turned up the face to the light, brushing off the dirt that clung to it.

"It is she!" he exclaimed. "Poor thing. Her troubles are over. The body is that of Miss Roff. I recognize and claim it."

"Is she dead?"

"Yes, and cold. She must have fallen through the hole in the floor above. I'll see if there are traces of her presence up there."

He laid down the body and climbed the rickety ladder to the loft. He found here a bed of straw, a blanket, bones of fowls, scraps of bread, broken ale-bottles.

Having satisfied himself that this mad woman had spent days and weeks in this singular asylum, he came down the ladder again and examined the body.

"That wound on her head and the broken ribs testify to the violence of her fall," he said. "I will convey the body to the Retreat."

He gathered up the body, wrapping it carefully in the blanket which still clung to it. He had a sheet of black waterproof cloth in the long box of his cart, and having laid the body on a bed of straw in it, he carefully buttoned down over it the black covering.

Expressing his thanks to her for having given him the clue which had led to the discovery of Miss Roff's body, the man climbed into his cart, and drove away at a quick pace.

Miss Bing looked after him with a satisfied smile.

She returned to the house and added another page to her letter, sealed it, and walked over to the farmer's cottage. She found the farmer just getting into his wagon. He was going to the market town. Giving the letter to him with strict injunctions to post it at the earliest possible moment, Miss Bing returned to the Cypressess.

This was the wedding morning of Darrel Moer and Hilda Floyd.

The body of the dead Carmine Moer was being jolted back to the madhouse from which she had escaped at the very moment when the words were being spoken in the church of St. Jude's which bound Darrel Moer to another woman.

And thus it was that Honor was Honor Gilt still. At last she might think tenderly of Sir Hugh Trevelyan. At last she might look forward to a union with him.

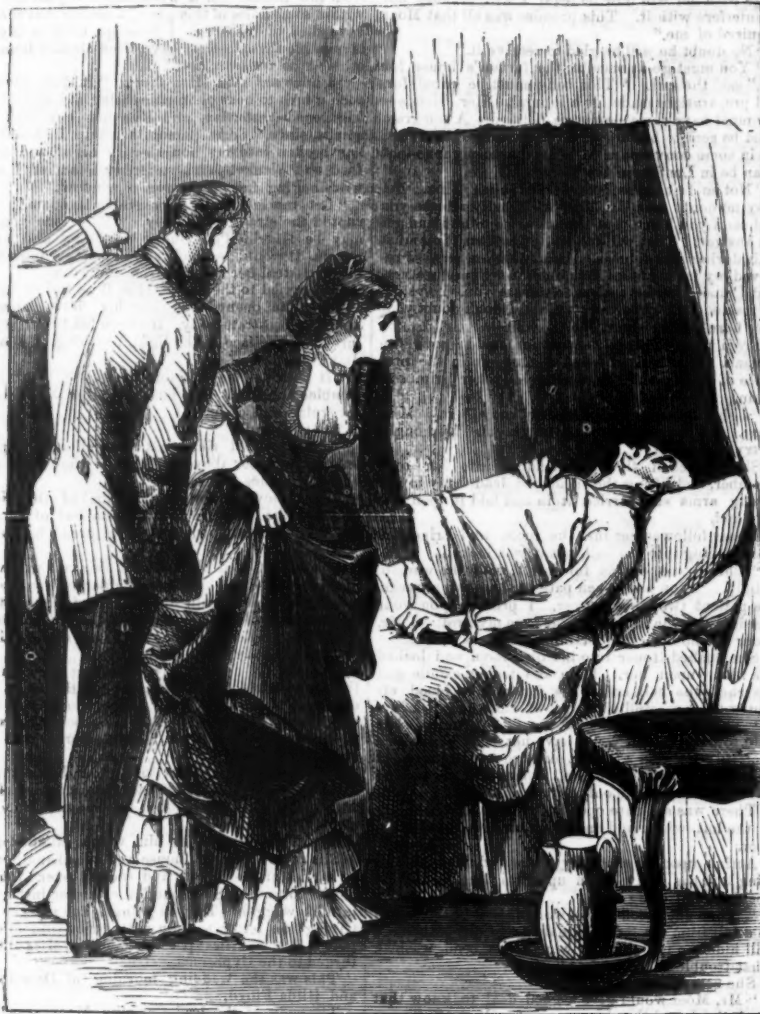
It seemed that but a day remained between her and liberty. But in the twenty-four hours succeeding Moer's marriage to Hilda Floyd events were to take a turn that shadowed Honor's fate more darkly than ever.

There yawned before her a peril more frightful than any of which she had dreamed—a fate so dark and terrible that it was well for her the future could not be unveiled.

(To be continued.)

THE KINGS.—A ship sailed once into the harbor of Naples, and the king and a glittering party of noblemen came off to visit her. To the honest sailor-eyes that could see no other sign of royalty than gold lace one faced man was as much of a king as another, and as one of the royal party upon the deck tripped and disappeared, a sailor stepped up to an officer, and touching his hat with a grin, said, briefly, "Phew, sir; one of them 'ere kings has tumbled down the hatchway."

THE POPE.—The Pope he leads a jolly life, according to the song. Contrariwise, it is said, that one reason of Pius IX's long life and good health is doubtless the simplicity of his table, and his abstinence from everything he finds injurious. He scarcely allows any condiments in his food, excepting; however, tomatoes, of which he is so fond that he almost gives the order which a Florentine gentleman always pronounces on the arrival of a new cook: "Be sure that you put tomatoes in everything but the coffee."



[UNCLE LEM'S DEATH.]

HOW I DID BETTER.

I DARE SAY that it was out of deference to my mental and natural superiority that I was permitted to pack the trunks. At any rate I enjoyed doing it immensely.

"I do believe, Ethel, that you like work," said Fan, at last, disdainfully, watching me.

"Of course I do! I wish I'd been a plain girl without any 'family position' to maintain; then, instead of going to visit Mrs. Elphinstone and trying to get married, I could learn a trade."

"Ethel!" exclaimed mamma, "don't say such things. It is vulgar. I believe you take after your Uncle Lemuel."

"I think I must," I replied.

"No one can preserve refinement who indulges in such nonsensical ideas. A lady should let them alone."

"And Uncle Lem—"

"Has been the bane of my existence. It makes my flesh creep to remember how he has mortified me," interrupted mamma.

Everything was in the trunks at last; all the pretty things on top, for I fancied such little effects. Fan's tray was topped with a sandal-wood glove-box and a quilted satin handkerchief-case. Fan herself, in a puffed cambric sacque, was doing her hair before the glass. Mamma was concocting a Frenchy-looking ribbon bonnet for herself out of the odds and ends of ribbon and lace left from our summer wardrobes.

"It is too bad for dear little mother to have to use our leavings," I remarked, rather indignant and full of admiration at her success. "She ought to have the very prettiest bonnet in Fleurette's shop."

"No one will know this did not come from there. One of these days I shall have more pretty things than I can wear—when you and Fan have rich husbands," rejoined mamma.

"We think so much about getting rich husbands

that I begin to fear we shall be unsuccessful," I said, half-dolefully.

"You have only to make the proper use of your opportunities during the next fortnight to enable me to run in debt to Fleurette for two bridal wreaths," laughed mamma, gaily. "Mrs. Elphinstone's invitation is really providential, and very kind of her. Not but that she is under obligations to me for attentions in times past, and not—I hope, Ethel, you will not forget—but that she may be proud to entertain the Misses Bouthorn. But people are often overlooked, despite good blood and beauty, if they are poor, and therefore I take it that Mrs. Elphinstone has been very kind. And while I think of it," added mamma, "I have two pieces of advice for you before you start. Don't compromise yourselves by flirting with young Elphinstone, for they don't mean to let him marry for the next ten years; and don't grow too intimate with the adopted daughter, or whoever she is, who lives with Mrs. Elphinstone."

Mamma had no need to advise Fan, who was plastic clay to her diplomatic teachings. Fan had great beauty and but one idea—which was to make a wealthy match.

As for me, I had several more ideas than was good for me, in mamma's opinion.

We hastened to don our travelling robes—old black silks which looked sufficiently stylish still—and took our way to the station.

Mamma had just purchased our tickets, and was piloting our way through the crowd, when she felt her shoulder touched, and, turning hastily, encountered Uncle Lem. He had a silk handkerchief tied about his head and slippers on his feet, and looked both pitiful and ludicrous.

"Why, Mary, you don't mean to let the girls travel alone, do you?" he asked, in his humble way. "Because I could go with them—"

"Lemuel," said my poor mother. I shall never forget her tone of distress, while for my part the idea

of Uncle Lem's escort to Mrs. Elphinstone's villa seemed too ludicrous, and I burst out laughing, while Fan stood in lofty abstraction, as though she was not acquainted with any of us. "Lemuel, go back. I insist upon it," said mamma, looking about for Mr. Elphinstone, who was to join us at the station, and who at the moment came in sight.

He recognized and hurried towards us, in company with a gentleman of about his own age. He scrutinized our evident agitation as he approached.

"My dear ladies," he said, looking anxiously from mamma to Uncle Lem, "has any one—is this person annoying you?"

Uncle Lem was slinking away.

"It is nothing, absolutely nothing," said mamma. "He was saying some ridiculous things, but evidently meant no harm," and she let it pass as if our relative had been some unknown, crazy intruder.

Mr. Elphinstone introduced his friend as Mr. Fowler, who was going home with him for a few days.

The bell was ringing; we hurried to the train, and sped onward towards our destinies.

Mrs. Elphinstone's country house was simply superb, and her style of living princely. The charms of wealth had never seemed so alluring before.

Our adventures, however, during the three weeks we spent there are not my story. I must pass them over and let you once more into the little back parlour where the packing for our departure had taken place.

"I told you it was providential," said mamma, going to and fro between the pantry and the centre table, whereon she was spreading an impromptu luncheon at three in the afternoon. "I felt it too, some way, when Mr. Elphinstone was introducing him. Oh, Fan, my child, what a great, good fortune for you."

Fan was satisfied, that was evident, with her achievement.

She looked more consequential as Mr. Fowler's fiancée than she had seemed hitherto.

"And you, too, are happy, darling?" said mamma, pausing to kiss me.

"I think I am, mamma. Mr. Ritter is only a clerk to be sure, but you know my views are not so extravagant as Fan's. I shall be content with a very moderate style of living, and when you meet Fred you will find him a gentleman."

I was afraid I emphasized the term a little too strongly. I looked at Fan, but her face was unruffled.

"It is something of a sacrifice for Ethel," she said, complacently. "I must confess I would have discouraged her if I could. And don't you think, mamma, that Ethel did the very two things you told her not to do—flirted with Tom Elphinstone, and got up such intimacy with that Maud Manners?"

"Has Mr. Fowler said anything about the time as yet?" inquired mamma.

She had to inquire, for it was a matter of food and shelter, a desperate struggle to keep our old home till we should be married.

"Oh, yes," returned Fanny, coolly. "He was very explicit in every way. He would like to be married in October."

"Of course you and Mr. Ritter have not made any definite plans yet?" mamma said, with a covert hope that we had.

"No," I answered, quite abashed that we had found time to realize each other's preference during the three weeks; while I gave me a hot, haughty feeling to think of being driven by necessity into speedy marriage, and excited the wild wish for independence I had often had before.

Fred, however, was just as anxious, when it came to the point, to marry at once as Mr. Fowler.

"We could have apartments to begin with," he said, "and take a house for ourselves as soon as our means permit."

Under mamma's management everything went off splendidly.

Even Uncle Lem made a tolerable appearance, emerging from his den in the fourth storey, where he had lived among his chemicals, his books and blow-pipes, ever since Fan and I could remember—in a new suit of broadcloth, for whose purchase we thought he must have made immense sacrifices.

Our aristocratic friends all honoured us with their presence.

At noon we saw Fan and Mr. Fowler start for their Continental tour, while an hour later Fred and I began our less pretentious bridal trip, which was to last a week.

During that week our old home was sold and our bills paid out of the proceeds.

Uncle Lem was set afloat.

Mamma went away to visit a niece, and very soon contracted a second and very satisfactory marriage on her own account. People said she was a marvellous manager.

Having let you into thus much of our family history, I will continue with those revelations which the romancer usually lets alone.

It was on a bright October morning, five years after my marriage, that I stood bidding my husband good-morning at the front door.

He was going to his business—it was the clerkship still—and I was desirous of paying some visits.

"By the way, Fred," I remarked, carelessly, "I have nothing but green gloves to wear with my new brown dress. Have you any cash?"

"Yes, I have, Ethel; but I was going to pay the butcher's bill."

"Suppose you pay him half to-day. And you need not order anything for dinner."

"It makes me feel mean, Ethel, to let such a bill run on."

Well, I can't go out this morning in green gloves."

Fred took out the money and gave me four shillings. He did not remark that he went bare-handed, while I reflected that there was not much satisfaction in having anything when it had to be angled for in this fashion.

I went in and sat down in the reception room of our little house, whose genteel front was to its inconvenient interior something as the fair face of a mermaid to her unlovely continuations, and meditated on the subject usually uppermost in my thoughts—to wit, money.

Oh, that we had only a little more money I fervently wished. But Fred's salary was not large, and we had nothing more.

We were always in debt somewhere, always terribly in need of something, always struggling not to be behindhand with our acquaintances. In short, we were shabby-genteel, and we felt it keenly.

I looked around the little bare room. I had always been hoping to save enough, somehow, for a few little adornments. But I hadn't been able to accomplish it. It is not my forte to save, I said to myself. But could I not make something? I had said the same thing often before.

The difficulty was I did not know how to make anything. I felt as if my married life had been wasted time.

Fred would have been more comfortable and more economical if he had not married me.

Martha interrupted my reverie for directions for dinner.

"I shall not be home to luncheon," I said, "and you may have anything there is for dinner, and some sort of a pudding—if you can make it."

I went off to my bedroom. I knew that the dinner would consist of some waxy potatoes, salt fish, and uneatable rice, and that Fred would fast in disgust. But I should have my gloves, and the spray of wax snow-drops which I desired to carry to Maud Manners by way of a bridal gift. It looked so mean to give nothing.

With this consolation I proceeded to dress. This was agreeable business, for I was to wear a new dress. Oh, the wear and tear of nerve and eyesight it had cost me; but it was very elegant, just as handsome as Fan's. It became me, too, and my hat matched it nicely. I was glad to get out of the house into the cheerful sunshine with the consciousness of being noticeably stylish as I walked along—forgetting the unpaid bills and the unpalatable dinner which would await my consideration upon my return.

My first errand was a bridal call upon Maud Birney, Mrs. Elphinstone's niece, against whom poor mamma had cautioned me on the occasion of that memorable visit.

Maud had been known to be engaged to George Birney even five years ago.

He was a clerk whose salary was not high, and he was free with his money; Maud had not a penny of her own, and so they had gone on, engaged, all these years.

One day we heard they had been quietly married, and had begun housekeeping. There were "no cards," and with some difficulty I obtained their address.

I liked Maud too well to give her up. Besides, I was curious to see how she and her husband were going to manage a poverty greater than our own.

The neighbourhood to which I wended my way was not attractive.

I thought that Maud would be obliged to lose her position here. I stepped over two or three children in getting up the steps, and found myself pulling a rickety bell designated by a diminutive plate. Maud was living upstairs!

No wonder she coloured slightly as she seized my hand and led me to her apartments.

"You see, Ethel, I am not going to be a drag upon George. We do not mean to spend any more married than he spent single. If our friends can't accept us here they must drop us."

"I for one shall not drop you, Maud, if only out of curiosity as to the success of your experiment. I have

heard that two could live more cheaply than one, but I have never seen it proved."

We were fairly in by this. I must say I was shocked with the meagreness of the appointments.

"It's all my work, Ethel, all the upholstery. And the material didn't cost as much as we used to spend in theatre-going every winter."

I could not exactly comprehend Maud's good spirits. I thought if I undertook to help my husband I should have to find a better way than this.

Maud conducted me, in gushing spirits, through her apartments, and the one used as a kitchen seemed positively the best of all.

"You appear to have a refined cook," I observed, perceiving the tasteful arrangements and a hanging-basket and a bird in one of the sunny windows.

"Ethel," said Maud, very solemnly, "I haven't any cook. I do it myself. You don't know how nice we have things."

"Your hands, dear, will be very nice. Do you mean that you wash the dishes?"

"Yes, and I don't feel that I lower myself. George and I wanted to get married. We thought we should be happier even though this was the only way we could live—and we are. I will tell you my convictions; marriage is partnership, and the wife should do her part."

"But this is such an ignoble part, Maud," I couldn't help saying. "If the wife could create an income by her own efforts it would be far different. But living to serve our lowest wants, living with scrubbing-brushes and potato-parings!—I don't believe it is right for any one like you."

She smiled that sweet smile of hers.

"There was nothing I could do to 'create income,' Ethel. It was this, or—parting."

"It is a shame for women not to be brought up to produce some sort of work that has value. The injustice—" I began.

"But you know, Ethel, they may learn almost anything they like. If I had gone when George and I were first engaged, and learned engraving on steel, etching on wood, or something of that sort for which I had taste, we should be independent. However, Aunt Elphinstone would not hear of it while I lived with her. She said the next thing would be I'd be declaiming woman's rights. Now it is too late to begin," said Maud, with her blithe smile again, as if there was great satisfaction in her conclusion.

She went with me to the street door when I bade her good-morning, quite oblivious of the fact that her "bronze brown" hair was put plainly behind her ears, and that she wore an apron. Of course it didn't make any difference in such a neighbourhood, but still I was shocked again; and I got into the omnibus which would take me to my sister's and cogitated about what I had seen, and concluded that Maud had made a mistake.

My sister lived in the style that fortune-tellers predict and fairy tales describe. I found her suffering from one of the headaches she affected when she wished to look peculiarly ravishing in a *peignoir* and cap.

In truth Fan looked like a grown-up French doll as she lay back in her sumptuous chair. Either "beauty is its own excuse for being" or Fan had not the slightest apology for being alive.

Her little girl—just the age that mine, who lived but a brief week, would have been—came toddling to me in her new gilt boots. Some way I felt the need of something wholesome and natural just then, and I caught up the child and gave her a passionate, fearful kiss.

"Oh, Fan," I said, "what a safety for one's heart—to have a sweet, innocent child of one's own."

Of course, in my sober senses I should never have said such a thing to my sister, to whom a baby was the flaming sword that precluded Paradise.

"Lucette," she said, rather sharply, "here is Clara again. Can't you keep here in the nursery? Sentiment is very pretty, Ethel," she added, when the door closed upon the gilt boots in a remarkable state of activity, "but I should call it very fortunate that you have no such care until Fred gets along a little. You are changing shockingly, with all that you have upon you."

"Fan, I'm a little doubtful whether people ought not to change; whether it isn't their duty to wear out the least little bit! I'm so tired of thinking of my form and my complexion. Sometimes I wish I had something else to do."

My sister opened her infantile, azure eyes to their widest, as if she meant to say "Bless my soul," or something similar. But she merely dropped the white lids after a second, and remarked:

"I suppose you and Fred have been quarrelling. I wouldn't do it. It spoils your expression. When Mr. Fowler makes little speeches about extravagance and waste—I suppose men always make them—I never answer. Then he is sorry, and brings me a bracelet or something to make up."

"But Fred can't bring me bracelets, and so I have to take my satisfaction in sharp words."

Fan put on her experienced look.

"Depend upon it you don't get half as much out of Fred as you might. You've no idea how I manage. Now I would have had a silk petticoat with that cashmere dress if I had been you."

I got up and walked across the room to examine a new cabinet and end the conversation. Somehow I didn't envy Fan as much as usual. I almost despised her.

I said nothing of my visit to Maud or of anything else that was in my mind.

Luncheon was ready, but I would not stay. Usually it gave me æsthetic pleasure to lunch with Fan. I glanced at the table, with its superb cloth, Bohemian glasses, silver standard, grapes, chocolate—the feast of Barmeside—and went on.

At the foot of Fan's palatial steps stood an elderly man, wrapped in a gray shawl, with meagre hands encased in ragged black gloves. I had seen the apparition before, and from force of habit my heart almost stood still with consternation.

There was no retreat, however. Uncle Lem knew me.

"Why, how do you do, Ethel?" he said, in his shy way, looking about with his little bright eyes as a canary-bird does.

"Pretty well, Uncle Lem. Were you going in?"

"Why, no—yes. I just happened to come this way."

Perhaps the transition state of my mind turned up just then an impulse of generosity, and prompted me to spare Fan the intrusion of Uncle Lem at her lunch table. Perhaps the craving there was in my own heart led me to read the longing and hunger and loneliness in Uncle Lem's restless eyes and thin old face.

It touched me to see him crawl back so again and again to us, just because we were kin—always repulsed, ignored, insulted, and yet from time to time crawling back.

"Funny is very busy, Uncle Lem, and she's not well either," I said. "Suppose you come home with me this morning to lunch; you can call here again."

"Oh, isn't convenient? Yes," he said, in his queer, knowing way, winking at me. "Go with you? Why, yes. If you're not obliged to hurry we will stop at my room and get my specs. Perhaps"—in his uncertain way—"I don't need this," feeling his shawl. "It doesn't look so well to walk with a lady," and he smiled in his weak, painful, put-down fashion.

I humoured Uncle Lem. It wouldn't make much difference when I got home. Besides—dear me, do we always have a selfish motive at the bottom of our best acts?—it drifted through my mind that this lonely, dreary, dreaded old man, my mother's brother, had been a man of ideas, an inventor, whose inventions failed; that he had known a good many brain-workers, women and men, and must be acquainted with the processes by which they worked; that perhaps his information in such things might help me.

All this, I say, drifted through my mind as I accompanied him to his lodging on my way home.

We went into his room—it struck me that I was having glimpses into diverse interiors that morning. Uncle Lem made a modest and futile attempt to disguise the circumstance that his bed was unmade. I did not look at it though, there were more curious things to see—a table containing retorts, blow-pipes, a coffee-pot, and some French rolls; a wire connecting two batteries on which several silk handkerchiefs were hung to dry; a little shelf containing boxes, tobacco, pipes, and sundry other articles which I might not have seen if Uncle Lem had not made an attempt—futile, like his attempt upon the bedclothes—to cover out of sight.

"Uncle Lem," said I, abruptly, "what do you think of women?"

"My dear, I—I didn't quite hear you," replied the old man.

"I mean about their capacities. For instance, did you ever know a woman like me who could do anything to make money?"

"Money, my dear," he replied, with his weak, pitiful smile, "what do you want of money?"

That certainly was a leading question, and in order to answer it I had to be confidential.

It was astonishing how Uncle Lem's pitiful looks and ways slipped off as we both got in earnest. I think he rehearsed pretty well all the achievements of women, from Semiramide down to Mrs. Tucker.

"But what could I do, Uncle Lem—if I knew how?"

"Bless me! The way is to do well what you undertake. If I was young—"

"Yes, if you were young and in my place?"

"Well, bless me! I'd go into an institution—"

"Yes—"

"And look around!"

"Uncle Lem, let us go."

The memories of that morning come back to me; they shine like death-lights over a grave—the grave of my helpless imbecility.

We walked from room to room in the institute. The stones seemed to quicken with life-purpose, to emit the fragrance of just actions.

I am not going to particularize in which branch of art or science I found my special vocation that day. It is enough for my story that I got the "leave" which Mrs. Browning bids us seek "to work." It was not "too late for me to begin," as Maud said.

My spirits soared in ecstasy.

The way was open; I need not cook the dinner, nor declaim woman's rights, nor intrigue for a dress or a bonnet. I could drill my brain tools, and use them and do better.

My only practical difficulty was to pursue my studies without Fred's knowledge, at least until I had tested myself, and knew that I should succeed, and this difficulty solved itself after the following fashion: Uncle Lem, being cheated out of luncheon, went home with me to dinner.

"You seem to have a deal of room here, Ethel," remarked Uncle Lem as he prepared to go, the dreary, lonesome look coming back to his face. "I pay rent you know, have to keep that right? Something in my face must have led him on, for he continued: 'If you wouldn't mind me, Ethel—I'd keep out of the way, you know. I might be useful—light the fire, and do a good many things for you.'"

His little eyes got burning bright, and his thin gray hair shook. He begged, with his eyes and hair and posture—begged as feeble, unsuccessful men and women do.

I will not pretend that my feelings were greatly affected, but I had never wholly shared the family antipathy to Uncle Lem. Perhaps I was a little like him, as mamma had said. However, I kept sight of the fact that he was a droll figure, and that my friends would laugh at him.

This would have been decisive but for another consideration. We had—told it not in Gath, whisper it not in Askelon—"a gentleman lodger in our front chamber, whose existence, whose discovery was the sword of fire suspended above my head." Uncle Lem might take his piece, and my mind be relieved. And Uncle Lem did so.

Fred made few comments, except that it was "deused hard to tell the nature of a woman, and no mistake." Here was this old man whom Fan and I had been dodging all our lives as if he were a plague, and now I had brought him to live under my roof. He supposed next I would be getting his portrait painted for the parlor wall.

Well, I really think I ought, for a new era began with his coming. I went to work to learn, as once I said I should like to, a trade—a resource wherein to expend my energies, a stimulant to myself-improvement, a narcotic for my dissatisfactions.

There was hard work for me without return all that winter. I kept my plan a secret from all but Uncle Lem. I think sometimes I might have given up but for him. Dear old enthusiast that he was! How glibly he told his theories of success. At least, they kept up my spirits.

I don't know whether or not Fred noticed the infrequency of my demands for money that winter. I wore my old dresses, and declined all invitations to large parties. I said to myself that I would give him a chance to catch up. It was rather late in the day for this chance. The number of debts we had made was appalling. So soon as we began to pay they hailed down upon us. We should have got through, I suppose, except for Fred's misfortune. On a foggy morning in February he fell and broke his ankle.

It seemed hard enough for him to bear the confinement and pain. To these were added the realization of the doctor's bill and the dread of losing his situation.

He had a secret torment, too, poor fellow, which I learned of later: he fancied that my love for him was growing cold, that he was less dear to me because he did not prosper.

One by one these troubles have cleared up, so there is no need of dissecting their lifeless memories. Let me hasten to the more pleasant task of dispelling the gloom which seemed deep enough one morning in March when Fred's employer called on his way to business with a look in his face that seemed to me ominous and made me watch for his departure, and hasten to my husband. He was deadly pale, for a low, nervous fever in connection with the fracture had weakened him sadly.

"Well, Ethel, the worst has come," he said as I entered.

"You have lost your place, Fred?"

"Yes. Mr. Moss has paid me half my salary for this quarter. He says they have been hoping I would get well, that everything is getting askew with my

work in the hands of a temporary clerk, and that they have engaged Billings in my place."

"I was silent for an instant.

"Well, dear, we must not despair," I said.

"I don't see much room for hope while debts are accruing and me helpless."

"We are young and strong, Fred."

I was on the point of betraying my secret when the postman's knock interrupted, and I stepped to the door to receive my letters.

There were several that morning, and one in a strange hand which I fairly clenched as I opened. It ran:

"DEAR MADAM.—Your specimen of work is received with favour. We should like more of equal merit. Enclosed is our cheque for twenty-five pounds, which we hope will remunerate you."

I put the letter in silence into Fred's hands. He was not half so much elated as I felt he should be. When he understood he said that it didn't seem just the thing, to him, for a woman to pay the expenses.

"Most of them bear their share of the burden in some measure," Fred. "Why may they not do it in the most congenial way?"

"I believe you take after your Uncle Lem a little bit, Ethel," said Fred, with a smile, as mother had said once before. "You have taken that crochets from him I'll warrant."

"Why, that reminds me," said I, "that I have neither heard nor seen him this morning. I must go to his room."

Uncle Lem was always a late riser, but it was now long after his usual hour.

When I knocked at his door there was no reply. Again and again I knocked. Still no answer, and the door was looked from within.

I went back to Fred, who got up, hobbled across the passage with his cane, and succeeded in turning the key with a pair of pincers.

The room was very quiet, in its customary disorder, and straight and silent on the bed lay Uncle Lem.

I approached him, awed all at once by the composure and unusual dignity of his placid face. I touched his hand and staggered back.

"Fred, Uncle Lem is dead!"

It was true. He was dead. The worn spirit had fled; the vacant heart was still.

Poor old Uncle Lem; he had given up all to an idea; had its failure or success mattered at the last?

The old man's desk was open, and a letter lay in sight, directed to Ethel Ritter—to myself. It was some hours before I opened it, with a dreary curiosity as to his last bequest.

Words can hardly express the shock of wonder with which I discovered what this bequest was.

Uncle Lem had died rich, and I was his heiress. The idea on the realization of which his life had been expended had been recognized and appreciated when the things of this life were no longer precious in his eyes.

He had found himself wealthy when wealth had no longer any attraction, when in fact it would only doom him to insouciant attentions. What he hungered for was a little love. His money could not buy that.

"You played your game well, Ethel," was Fan's comment upon my inheritance.

I allowed it to pass without reply.

"You see that Heaven helps those who help themselves," said Maud Birney, whom I had taken into my confidence about my work.

I have said that I felt as if Uncle Lem's portrait ought to hang upon my parlor wall—not because his gift has enriched us, made our lives pleasant and our ways peaceful, so much as because it seems to me that but for that chance meeting at Fan's inhospitable door I should have never known the delights of having nerve and will, strung up to action; because it seems as if Uncle Lem's counsel on that eventful day was the spark which fired the train, and that but for him I should still be intriguing for "small bills," turning my dresses, despising myself, and dissatisfied with my existence.

As it is I have a higher plane—work of my own which the possession of a dozen fortunes could not tempt me to abandon.

W. H. P.

"We hear from Florence that Prince Charles Poniatowski lately sold four splendid pieces of old tapestry. One of them alone was bought by the Museum of the Louvre for 20,000*fr.*

The prices of admission to St. Paul's Cathedral have been lowered to 8*d.* for the library, clock, whispering and stone galleries, and 2*s.* for the other galleries and the ball.

The recent rains, followed by severe frosts, have caused great landslips at the Dover Cliffs. Several hundred tons fell from one cliff, crushing in the back part of some houses and endangering others. Large

names also have fallen from the Shakespeare Cliff. One turnpike road was blocked for many hours.

FACETIÆ.

In San Francisco hangs the sign of a Chinese washerman, which reads thus:—"Washing and ironing, by Wa Shing."

FOR STILL TONGUES.—England is justly proud of her ruins, but there is one for which she has good reason to blush—that which is "blue."—*Fun.*

A TEMPTING OFFER.—*St. Giles to St. James:* "I say, miss—look-ye-er—yourn be a main pretty cat—an' mine be a main pretty 'at—now any the word an' I'll swop yer. There!"—*Fun.*

TAKING THEIR WALKS.—An Irish advertisement has the following:—"One Pound Reward. Lost, a cameo brooch, representing Venus and Adonis on the Drumcondra Road, about ten o'clock on Tuesday evening."

DEPRIVITY.—In a police case lately a boy being asked if he knew the nature of an oath gave an affirmative reply. When asked what they do to persons who swear to a falsehood he replied, "They make policemen out of 'em."

A "BLOW" FOR PAPA.—A lady having her dress trimmed with bugles before going to a ball, her little daughter wanted to know if the bugles would blow when she danced. "Oh, no," replied the mother, "but papa will when he sees the bill!"

NOT SO DUSTY.—The *South London Press* informs us that the wife of the bandmaster of the Queen's Westminster Rifles has presented her husband, Mr. Dust, with three sons at one birth. [This is raising several dusts with a vengeance.]—*Fun.*

SPELLBOUND.—"My son," said a fond papa, who was looking over the lesson his boy had recited that evening, "how did you manage when your teacher asked you to spell 'madness' psychically?" "Oh, father," said the boy, "I just stood spellbound."

LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP.—It is possible, said an experienced uncle to an adolescent nephew, to be tolerably comfortable in marriage, if your wife enjoys good health and you enjoy as much money as will enable you to afford to gratify all her inclinations besides your own.—*Punch.*

PLEASE THE PRICE—OR OTHERWISE.—At Acton, in a pig-keeping nuisance case, a witness described the prevailing odour as being so thick that "he could cut it with a knife." His instinct of self-preservation should have taught him to cut it—under any circumstances.—*Fun.*

SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE.—A physician, on presenting his bill to the executor of the estate of a deceased patient, asked, "Do you wish to have my bill sworn to?" "No," replied the executor; "the death of the decedent is sufficient evidence that you attended him professionally."

WORDS THAT BURN.

Customer: "Waiter, I ordered a chopp underdone. This is burnt to a cinder."

Waiter: "Very sorry, sir, I'll speak to the cook."

Customer: "Cook!—You mean the charwoman?"—*Fun.*

PATRIE MACHE-NEUR.—The latest news from America is that the railways there are about to try "paper wheels." For all their gear-head qualities the Yankees are behind us here. For a long time many railways in this country have been entirely constructed of paper—and not always "good paper."—*Fun.*

"COMPARISONS ARE ODIOUS."

Mrs. G: "I really must give cook warning, Charles. She does use such very bad words."

Mr. G: "Really, dear! What sort of words are they?"

Mrs. G: "Oh—well—the same as you use!"—*Fun.*

CAUSE AND EFFECT.—A young draper's clerk committed suicide a few days ago. At the inquest the coroner asked a fellow clerk of the deceased if he knew of any cause for the suicide. "No," was the reply; "he was getting along nicely, and was going to be married next month." "Going to be married, was he?" exclaimed the coroner. "That will do. We've got at the bottom of this business!"

PRO-A-R(S) IS IT PRO(S).

Housemaid: "Oh!—so you must go on strike, too, Mr. Robert, must you?—leavin' of us all to be murdered, lot alone burglars? Never again down this area—never in your life, sir! there!"

(Looks into pocket, and puts shilling in her pocket.) Voice from B. box: "Never again!—as I'm a British cook!"—*Fun.*

PURK me those Norfolk bluffs, because they have reminded me that in 1445 the people of Norfolk and Suffolk complained to Government of the increase

of attorneys in those parts. It was alleged that there were twenty-four, and that no end of lawsuits were the consequence. The petitioners begged that the number might be cut down to six or eight, at which, let us hope, it remains.—*Punch*.

TIMEO DANAOS, ETC.
First Boy: "It yer, did he? Why didn't yerspeak to the policeman on duty?"

Second Boy: "Policeman on duty!! Oh, I desay I ain't so fond of 'em!"—*Punch*.

CIVIL FORCE.
Small Boy: "Give us a shay, miss, for a guarding of the peace!"

Lady: "What do you mean, child?"

Small Boy: "Well, miss, now the bobbies is on strike, you'll ave to look to us private citizens for protection!"—*Fun*.

NEAR my abode is fixed a placard, warning mankind that a culprit was fined heavily the other day for "needlessly ringing a bell." I wish I could make a similar example of a similar offender, who commits a similar crime on Sundays from 10:30 to 11, and from 2:30 to 3. Church bells were excellent things when there were no clocks and watches, but now are an anachronism, though proclaiming time.—*Punch*.

THE BARE IN ARMS.

We are informed on official authority that thirteen 35-ton guns have just been completed at Woolwich, and the first portion of them will, in a few days, leave the Royal Arsenal for service abroad. It would seem as if Woolwich infants are born blind like puppies, and their sights take a long time adjusting. At any rate they are only just going to sea!—*Fun*.

THE LOST HORSE.—A good story is told about a clergyman who lost his horse on a Saturday evening. After searching with a boy until after midnight he gave it up in despair. The next day, somewhat dejected at his loss, he went into the pulpit and took for his text the following passage from Job: "Oh, that I knew where I might find him!" The boy, who had just come in, supposing the horse was still the burden of his thought, cried out, "I know where he is. He's in Deacon Smith's barn."

A SAD CASE.

Mr. Kiljoye: "I'm so glad you've come, Dr. Bland! I want to consult you about my poor wife."

Dr. Bland: "What's the matter with her?"

Mr. Kiljoye: "Such fearful depression of spirits!"

Dr. Bland: "Depression of spirits! Why, she's the life of the party!"

Mr. Kiljoye: "Ah, she always beats up in company, poor thing! But you should only see her when we are together alone!"—*Punch*.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.—In a jolly company each one was to ask a question; if he was answered he paid a forfeit; or if he could not answer it himself he paid a forfeit. Pat's question was, "How the little ground-squirrel digs his hole without showing any dirt about the entrance?" When they all gave it up Pat said, "Sure, do you see, he begins at the other end of the hole." One of the rest exclaimed, "But how does he get there?" "Ah," said Pat, "that's the question—can you answer it yourself?"

SAVING THE DINNER.—In Charles the Second's reign a free table was allowed for the court chaplains. At one time, however, the king being rather in no-conscious circumstances, ordered this dinner to be discontinued, but to offer instead, honoured his clergyman with his presence at the last intended dinner. The grace used to be, "God save the king and bless the dinner." But Dr. South, who presided on this occasion, transposed the words to "God bless the king, and save the dinner." "And it shall be saved," said the king, amused at the doctor's humour, and instantly countermanded the order.

BROWN'S KNIGHT THOUGHTS.

"Hullo!" says Brown—fat-headed Brown! he is generally called—the other day, "I never heard of this cove before." Brown had been carefully reading his weekly paper right through until he came to the following:

Mr. Josiah Mason has accepted the offer of the honour of Knighthood, which has been made to him through Mr. Gladstone. The distinction will be conferred by Letters Patent.

"I thought," mused F. H. B., "that the Queen was the only person who could confer the honour of Knighthood. I daresay though that this new chap, Mr. Letters Patent, is one of those fellows in the frilled hats I saw at the Tower. What an idiot I was not to have stood a quart then, I might have been the first Sir Brown of Brownlow Street."—*Fun*.

THE FLOOD.

"Father," said a young lipser of four summers, "when was the Flood?"

"Oh, my son," replied the parent, "that happened a great while ago."

"With we alive then?" persisted the little inquirer.

"No, dear," was the reply; "the Flood we read of in the Bible happened many thousand years ago."

"Well, now," rejoined the boy, in great disgust, "that is too bad! I thought Tom Brown" (another youngster of the same age) "with Ribbing. He said to me this morning that he was there then, and waded through."

ELECTRICITY AND LOVE.—A lover, failing to make a favourable impression on the heart of the girl whom he loved, went to a fortune-teller for advice. The fortune-teller advised him to try electricity on the obdurate fair one. Thereupon the lover procured an electric battery, and after a deal of manoeuvring succeeded in connecting it with a seat which the young lady was occupying. At a favourable moment he turned on the electricity, and the young lady sprang toward the ceiling. But she came down again, and, with the lightning flashing from her eyes, caught him by the collar, opened the door, and directed his attention to the pavement. "This we consider one of woman's rights."

GIVE HIM A LIFT.

Oh, the blessings the world might have
If the stewards the germs would save;

Every gift, every good retain,
And the faltering steps restrain,
Just by a lift!

Yonder lad with the beaming eye,
Pressing on with a stifled sigh,
Seeking the good from the ill to sift,
Checked and chilled by the stormy drift—
Give him a lift!

That young girl who is peering round,
Softly treading the dangerous ground,
Looking ahead for the beacon light,
Which is almost beyond her sight—
Give her a lift!

See that wreck on the sea of life,
Nearly swamped by the waves of strife!
Stay not to count every spot you see,
Nor to say what he ought to be—
Give him a lift!

There is one who has done his best,
And he toils with no hope of rest!
Ye who can ride all your life at ease,
And can do as your fancies please,
Give him a lift!

A few steps may suffice at most;
Just an effort—that is not lost!
Saving the wasting of years through care
So the fruits of their toil they'll share,
Give them a lift!

Not to pamper a wild desire—
Just the aid that they each require;
Some in the shade and the others in sun,
And the stewards must see it done,
Give them a lift!

Oh, the blessing—the heavenly dower!
Oh, the glorious gift of power!
Which shall the true in the truth retain,
And the wandering steps restrain,
Giving a lift!

G. H. H.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

To make yellow wax into white wax the former is boiled in water, spread out into thin layers, and exposed to the light and air. This is repeated until all the colour is gone and the wax remains pure and white.

LEMON PIE.—The juice and grated rind of one lemon, one cup of water, one tablespoonful of corn starch, one cup of sugar, one egg, a piece of butter the size of a small egg, boil the water, wet the corn starch with a little cold water, and stir it in, when it boils pour it on the sugar and butter, add the egg and lemon, bake with two crusts.

PIGEON PIE.—Having picked and cleaned five pigeons, stuff them with a stuffing of grated cold ham, grated bread, salt, pepper, and butter. Pour milk and water into the dish until the pigeons are nearly covered. Put a lid of paste on the top, and bake an hour. If you wish the pigeons very tender, parboil them twenty minutes, and use the water in which they are boiled to make the pie.

SAIL-STEAM.—The iron clipper ship, "Star of Persia," 1,227 tons, one of Messrs. Corry's "Star line of Calcutta packets," has just completed the voyage from the Downs to Calcutta and back in 8 months and 12 days. The outward passage occupied 77 days.

The run from the Cape to Calcutta, a distance of over 6,000 miles, was performed in 22½ days, being the fastest passage ever made from the Cape by either sailing or steamship. The "Star of Persia" previous voyage occupied 6 months and 25 days.

STATISTICS.

CORONERS.—A return completed for the year 1870 shows no less than 330 coroners in England and Wales—238 for districts in counties and 97 for boroughs. The great majority of these functionaries are elected by the freeholders or town councils, but in some cases, by charter or prescription, the appointment is made by the lord of a manor. The coroner for the hundred of High and Low Peak, Derbyshire, is appointed by the possessor of the Horn of Ulphus. Every one of the five coroners of Huntingdonshire is appointed by an individual by privilege—viz., by the Duke of Manchester, the Earl of Sandwich, the Earl of Caryfort, and Mr. Fellowes, M.P. The coroner for the Isle of Wight is appointed by the governor of that island. The Dean and Chapter of Ely appoint the coroner for the liberty of St. Ethelreda, Suffolk; the appointment of the two coroners for Peterborough has passed from the Dean and Chapter to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Most of the county coroners are now paid by salaries, with an allowance for expenses. The two elected county coroners for Surrey received between them 3,206*l.* in the year 1870. There are twenty-one coroners for the various districts into which Yorkshire is divided, besides coroners for York, Leeds, Hull, Doncaster, Pontefract, Scarborough, and Richmond. There are eleven coroners for various hundreds or manors of Lancashire; the coroner for West Derby receiving 900*l.* salary and 953*l.* with expenses in the year. The county of Middlesex allows salaries of 2,057*l.* for the eastern district, 1,700*l.* for the central, and 600*l.* for the western; but the actual payments in the year to the several coroners were 4,986*l.* for the eastern district, 5,429*l.* for the central, 1,665*l.* for the western, 1,290*l.* for Westminster, and 150*l.* for the Duchy of Lancaster. The coroner for the city of London received 885*l.* for salary and 457*l.* for expenses; the coroner for Southwark 624*l.* The year's payment for Birmingham was 2,183*l.*—viz., 1,135*l.* for the coroner's fees, 880*l.* for surgeons and other witnesses, and 168*l.* for other expenses. The coroner for Manchester is stated to have received 1,492*l.*, and the coroner for Liverpool 2,310*l.*, both being paid by fees. Some coroners received very small sums in the year, and must have had very little to do. The coroner for Gillingham liberty, one of the eleven coroners of Dorset, received 4*l.*; the coroner for the manor of Hale, one of the Lancashire eleven, 1*l.* and 12*s.* for expenses, and the coroner for the manor of Prassot 4*l.* for salary and 12*s.* for expenses; the coroner for Richmond, Yorkshire, received 3*l.* 4*s.* 4*d.*; the coroner for Thetford, 3*l.* 2*s.* 2*d.*

MISCELLANEOUS.

It has transpired that the renowned omnibus starting-place, the "Angel," Islington, is not in Islington at all, but in Clerkenwell. It is well our grandmothers died in time to get out of the reach of this shock to "native" belief.

The Emperor of Russia, shortly after his return to St. Petersburg, held a splendid review over 27,670 men, 1,061 officers, and 35 generals, with 106 guns. The Czar was cheered most enthusiastically.

The fact that the atmosphere at and near the sea-shore is richer in ozone than it is in inland places has been explained by M. Gorup Besenker, who finds by experiment that ozone is formed by the evaporation of water. Ozone is oxygen in a most active condition.

Over the night new pontoon bridges now being built over the Rhine between Alsace and Baden that at Huningen has just been opened, and, on an average, is crossed by 6,000 passengers per week. While Alsace was French there was but one bridge of Strasbourg along the whole length of the province.

A BLUE BEARD STORY.—Spain is enjoying a Blue Beard sensation. In an old house in Granada, which has been undergoing repairs, the workmen have come upon a subterranean passage 185 feet long by 7½ wide, carved out of the solid rock, and at the end of which were found seven skeletons. The house formerly belonged to a wealthy Portuguese named Isaac Redro Corne, whose sons are still living. The merchant died at Vera Cruz about 20 years ago, the widow of his sixth wife. The question of course arises, are these skeletons the remains of Corne's wives, and how did they get there? As Corne is probably the only man who could have explained the mystery, it likely to remain a mystery.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

T. M. K.—The only course is for you to forward your communication, and we will print it as we do others.

A CONSTANT READER.—Order one of any bookseller or news-vendor; they vary in price, from 6d. upwards.

J. W. F.—We must decline to give the private address of the Admiral. Write to either or both "The Senior," and "Junior United Service Clubs." The former we should think the most likely.

J. H. B.—The coins you name have no market, but only a fancy value, that is the value given by any connoisseur who might desire to obtain one. They are not rare, as any dealer in old coins will inform you.

A CONSTANT READER.—1. You cannot obtain the services of a Q.C. without paying him a large fee. 2. Being defendant in the suit, you must employ a solicitor, who of course will give you any information.

J. W. B. (Easton).—The Cinque Ports, on the south-coast of England, were originally five, hence their name—viz., Dover, Hastings, Hythe, Romney, and Sandwich; Winchelsea and Rye were afterwards added.

A CONSTANT READER.—1. There are so many different coloured inks that you must let us know the special colours you require before we can give the receipts. 2. The best book is Cooley's Dictionary of Practical Receipts, but it is expensive.

SMALL SORROWS.—Out of a "Small Sorrow" many a fine poem has been created, but it has been by the pen of the true poet. The rhymes are false in metre and wanting in force—in fact too common-places for our columns.

LUPOVIC.—The articles of jewellery you mention may be worn at all times and upon all occasions (taking into consideration, of course, your position in life). The size must depend upon your own taste. To our thinking the smaller and unpretentious any article of jewellery is the better, for all useless display is vulgar.

B.—(of Sheffield).—1. The clergyman's readiness to help the carter was befitting his sacred calling, and surely an act of kindness, although of duty also. 2. You could be neither right nor wrong in making it known, still we think to publish it would be unnecessary, and might annoy the gentleman.

S. C. J.—The centenary of Linnæus's death will be celebrated at Stockholm on the 10th of January, 1873, when a statue of the great Swedish naturalist will be unveiled. He died at Upsala (in the university of which city he was for many years Professor of Botany) in the sixty-eighth year of his age.

R. S. S.—It is true, as our correspondent writes, that sincerity is an important element in poetry—may, true feeling is its very soul, but then even with the divine afflatus, which is not given to one in a hundred thousand, a master of the mechanical art of versification is a sine qua non, and in this, we regret to say, "R. S. S.'s" verses are sadly deficient.

ANXIOUS.—There are very many remedies for chilblains. Here are three: 1. Sulphate of copper, 1 oz.; rosemary water, 1 pint; dissolve. 2. Sal-ammoniac, 1 oz.; vinegar, 1 pint. 3. Sal-ammoniac, 1 oz.; rum, 1 pint, camphor, 1 lb. The affected part is wetted with the above night and morning, and when dry is touched with a little simple ointment, cold cream or pomatum.

JOHN.—1. Without doubt in the event of your decease your wife could obtain the money, without you willed it otherwise. 2. If you desire to withdraw the money you will see by the notice on the savings' bank book that you have but to give so many days' notice of intention of withdrawal. 3. In no case is the money safe from your creditors, who by a legal proof might be empowered to attach it.

MAC ALEX. C.—From inquiry we have reason to believe the office you name to be respectable; as, however, during the last few years so many public companies, whose prospectuses bore the highest names in the commercial and social world, have come to grief we must forbear to recommend any special office; as a rule, however, those of longest standing are the safest for insurers, if not most profitable to the shareholders.

A READER.—If the loss of hair has not arisen from debility, in which case you should get your head shaved, try the following excellent recipe:—Castor oil, 5 oz.; white wax, 1 oz.; alkanet root, 1 lb.; beat them together until sufficiently dissolved, then strain, and add oil of origanum and oil of rosemary, of each, 1 dr.; oil of nutmeg, 1 dr.; otto of roses, 10 drops. You will find it an excellent hair restorer.

H. H. W. G. T.—1. Pronounced as if spelt—Apparrent. 2. H. R. H. is assuredly not a member of the order you name. 3. Your handwriting is very good, and

would fit you for any such office, but especially that of a land and estate agent. 4. How could you put such a question? Of course it is expected, hoped, nay, perhaps prayed by every Briton and American, that Dr. Livingstone will return to England.

J. S. W.—You should congratulate the happy pair especially the bride, whose beauty and virtues you must take for granted she has derived from her excellent parents, and by no means forget to say something pretty and tasteful to the bridesmaids, and anything else appropriate which your knowledge of the assembled company will teach you. Should you require such help you can purchase from any bookseller a shilling volume of ready-made speeches for almost every occasion.

IGNORANCE.—1. Marriage being regarded (legally) as a civil contract between two persons, the bride must sign her maiden name, otherwise the marriage certificate would be of no value. 2. Knowing as you must the tastes of the gentleman to whom you are engaged, you should adapt your present accordingly. It should be something at the same time ornamental, a ring, a breast pin, a volume of poems, or, if a smoker, even a meerschaum pipe, the latter only of course if you do not intend to discourage the bad habit. 3. By their Christian names of course, if you have been introduced to and are on familiar terms with the family. 4. Orthography correct, handwriting good, but to our taste too large to be ladylike.

AILING.—1. Hens will lay well in a hen-house of proper dimensions warmly situated, with white-washed walls, gravelly bottom, and no draughts, but certainly not so well as when they are permitted to take their room at will, or in their natural state. 2. Bronchitis generally yields to small and repeated doses of ipecacuanha and antimonial diaphoretics; a light diet and mild purgation being at the same time adopted. Chronic, as the name implies, is merely a question of time; it may be outlived like many other diseases, with proper care and treatment. 3. There are at least two hundred recipes for cough lozenges. There are different lozenges for different purposes. It is therefore not only cheaper but safer for your health to purchase them ready made. You can procure even a pennyworth.

WAITING FOR JAMIE.

I sat in the shadow of apple-tree boughs,
A braiding my bonny brown hair,
And waiting for Jamie to whisper his vows,
My Jamie, the pride of Kildare.

I saw the warm sun kiss the glad glowing West,
As she toyed with the gold of his hair;
I thought of bright curls, my hand had caressed,
His curls, the pride of Kildare.

The robin above me trilled low to his mate,
The grass donned her night-robe of dew,
A cool zephyr passed me and whispered, "Tis late."

Your Jamie to you is untrue."
The white moon arose, then hid her cold face
Beneath a black storm-woven veil;
But still I kept braiding each bonny brown tress,
Nor believed the weird wind's whispered tale.

The thunder low muttered—the storm shook the boughs,
And scattered white bloom in my hair;
Fit woe for the maiden, awaiting love's vows,
From Jamie, the pride of Kildare.

Twice twenty long summers have blossomed the boughs,
And whitened my bonny brown hair,
And still I am waiting for love's whispered vows—
For Jamie, the pride of Kildare. J. J.

CARA CLARA, a clerk, twenty-six, 5ft. 5in., fair complexion, a lively disposition, and has travelled. Respondent must be about his own age or younger.

LE GREENBERG, nineteen, 5ft. 7in., a bandsman in the Army, would like to correspond with a young lady rather good looking and has a little money.

GEORGE CLINTON, twenty-one, fair, rather tall, with 200l. income, would be glad to correspond with a young lady of the same age, fair, and fond of music.

LIZZIE, twenty, medium height, brown hair, dark eyes, a domestic servant, and would make a very affectionate wife.

LORELY LOTTIE, twenty-one, tall, fair, and very domesticated. Respondent must be a tall, fair young man, about the same age, a sailor preferred.

M. K., eighteen, medium height, blue eyes, dark hair, domesticated, and loving. Respondent must be good looking, fond of home, and make a loving husband.

MANIA, twenty-one, medium height, rather stout, dark-brown hair, light-blue eyes, loving, and fond of children, would like to correspond with a farmer.

LEVORUS, thirty, and tall, would like to correspond with a tall, good-looking young lady, with a small fortune.

JOHN WILLIAMS, eighteen, fair complexion, fair hair and light eyes. Respondent must be well educated, and of a loving disposition.

CONSTANCE, twenty-three, medium height, dark hair, loving, and would make a good wife. Respondent must be loving, and not over twenty-seven.

AGNES, twenty-eight, tall, considered handsome, and in a good position. Respondent must be about the same age, dark, and able to keep a home comfortable.

JACK T., twenty-six, 5ft. 8in., light hair and eyes, and of a loving nature. Respondent must be dark, and pretty, about the same age, of a loving and affectionate disposition.

BILLY, twenty-three, tall, fair complexion, dark-blue eyes, and well able to keep a wife. Respondent must be about the same age, pretty, affectionate, fond of home, and children.

BLANCH, nineteen, medium height, light-brown hair, blue eyes, dark complexion, loving, and domesticated. Respondent must be about twenty-two, tall, fair, with blue eyes, loving, fond of home and children, and in a comfortable position.

NEW ZEALAND, forty-three, medium height, fair complexion, fond of home, and loving, would like to correspond with a respectable woman of middle age, a widow

not objected to. "N. Z." is a tradesman and about to re-embark in business.

O. T., nineteen, 5ft. 4in., a seaman in the Royal Navy, fair complexion, blue eyes, and of a loving disposition. Respondent must be about the same age, fond of home and children.

H. J. (Ireland), twenty-seven, tall, over 100l. a year, very affectionate, and fond of home, wishes to meet with a sensible, affectionate lady, with some means, no objection to a widow without children.

LILLIAN, eighteen, medium height, olive complexion, with dark hair and eyes, considered pretty, affectionate, and fond of home. Respondent must be about twenty-two, fair and tall, a gentleman in the Navy preferred.

MAUD, twenty-three, short, light-brown hair, blue eyes, fair complexion, loving, and domesticated. Respondent must be about twenty-five, dark, fond of home and children, and able to make a wife comfortable.

ROSANNA, a domestic servant, eighteen, 5ft. 3in., has auburn hair, rather good looking, and an affectionate disposition. Respondent must be dark, about the same age, and of a loving disposition.

EDWARD K., twenty-two, rather tall, good looking, affectionate, well educated, and loving. Respondent must be able to make a home happy, be good looking, and about twenty.

ALICE, twenty-two, medium height, fair complexion, light hair, domesticated, and very fond of children, would like to correspond with a young man who is tall, affectionate, and fond of home.

S. M., nineteen, short, fair, with gray eyes, respectfully connected, fond of music and singing, wishes to correspond with a young woman about eighteen, must be fair, with blue eyes and light hair, one religiously inclined preferred.

BROWN EYED SUSIE, thirty-two, not very tall, black hair, brown eyes, has a little money, and is a domestic servant, would like to correspond with a respectable young man a little older than herself, quiet, and domesticated, and able to keep a wife comfortably.

LILY OF THE VALLEY, VIOLET, and ROSEBUD. "Lily of the Valley," seventeen, fair, pretty, tall, and domesticated, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty-two, rather tall, and dark complexion, with independent means. "Violet," nineteen, medium height, good looking, fond of music, a good figure, domesticated, and very fond of children, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty-five, fair complexion, and in easy circumstances. "Rosebud," eighteen, dark, good looking, rather tall, domesticated, and fond of children, would like to correspond with a good-looking young man about twenty-three.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:—ENNET is responded to by—"Georgina Read," dark-brown eyes, curly hair, a loving disposition, and a domestic servant.

E. M. by—"A. Z. S." JOSEPH S. by—"G. I.," twenty, medium height, good looking, fair, a domestic servant, and very fond of home. G. W. C. by—"S. M.," twenty-three, medium height, dark, loving, and domesticated, a tradesman's daughter.

BENJAMIN by—"Emeline G.," eighteen, well educated, fond of music, and domesticated. WILLIAM B. by—"Fanny E.," twenty, good looking, fond of home and music.

R. H. S. by—"Annie B.," not tall, fair hair, dark eyes, and clear complexion. JENNY by—"Maud," twenty, dark-blue eyes, fond of home, music, and children.

JACK by—"Emily Garrod," twenty-three, dark, lively, and of a loving disposition. DAVID by—"Jenny," twenty-eight, dark hair and eyes, loving, good looking, and fond of home, in service.

CARBY by—"Y. H. C.," twenty-two, tall, very good looking, and a mechanic. LORELY HARRY by—"Lillian," medium height, blue eyes, considered good looking, and thoroughly domesticated.

JOHNBY by—"Miscellaneous Nell," twenty, medium height, light-brown hair, gray eyes, and considered pretty. HENRY C. B. by—"Mary E.," and by—"A Widow," twenty-six, passionately fond of music, has a small income, and would make a good wife.

EDWARD F. by—"Louisa," eighteen, rather tall, light-brown hair, fair complexion, fond of home, and domesticated. ANHELIA by—"Roving Harry," her own age, 5ft. 5in., dark-brown hair, blue eyes, fond of home and music, wishes her to be a Protestant.

LOVING TED by—"Home-loving Emmie," a respectable tradesman's daughter, brown hair, gray eyes, ladylike, very fond of music, has a little money, and would make a loving wife.

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